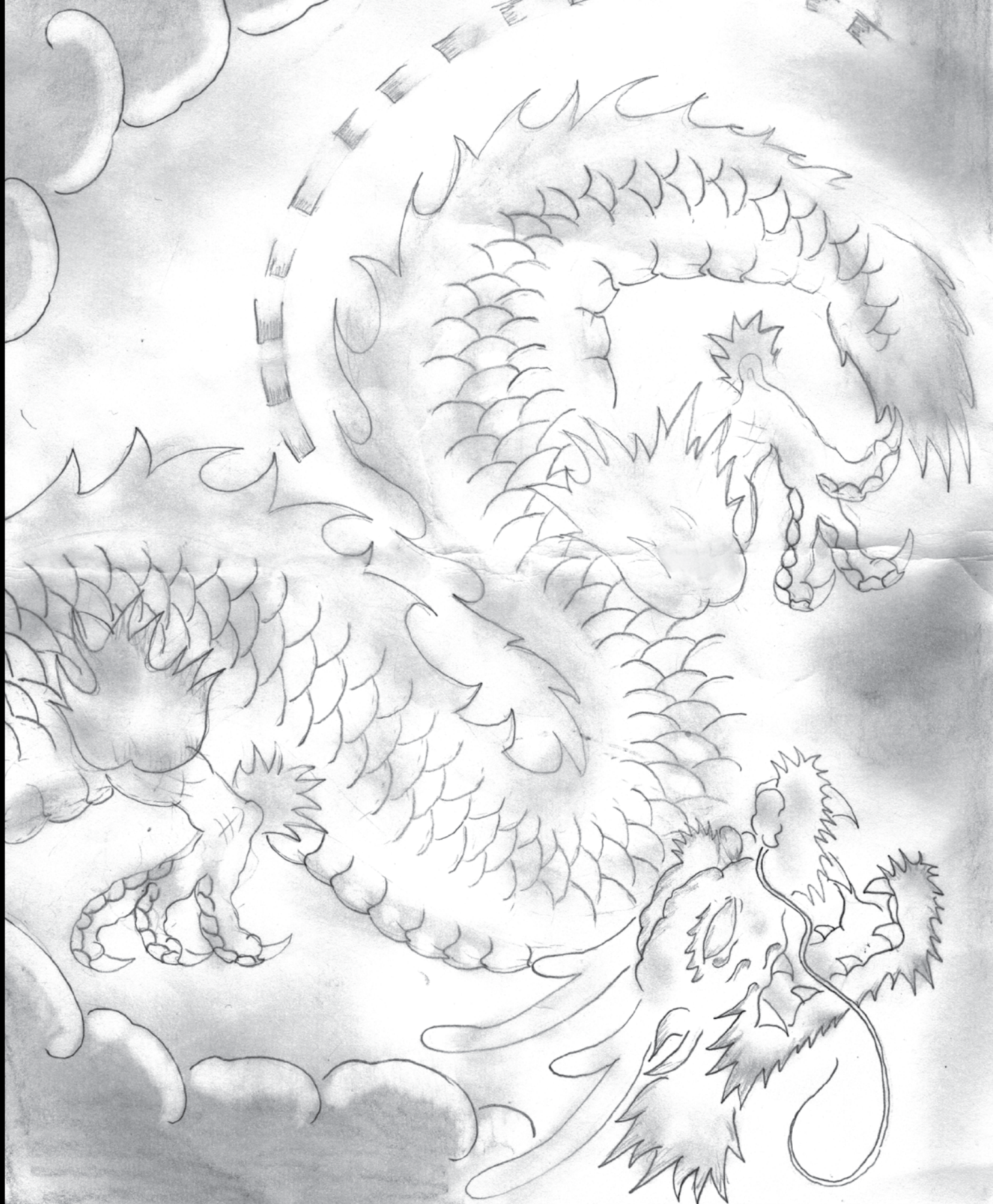


The Beat Within



THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 13.17



It's another week of great Beat writing, and another great Beat to get off our computers and out into the world. And the world is demanding more and more.

Last week, The Beat went to New Mexico at their invitation, and we were a great hit. For our New Mexico juvenile hall writers, being in The Beat is a great accomplishment, and we agree with them. It is a great accomplishment (one which those who appear in our pages every week sometimes take for granted, not realizing what a great opportunity at self-expression this is).

This week, The Beat has accepted an invitation from the juvenile probation department in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C. We'll only be there for one day (and we'll tell you how it went next week), but we'll be doing some Beat workshops there, as we have done in so many places, and we're sure young writers there will respond with their best efforts.

(Because we have so few staff this week, this issue of The Beat is somewhat condensed. There are no San Jose or Santa Cruz submissions in this issue, but they will resume next week. Also, for the second week in a row, there is no writing from Camp Sweeney in Alameda.)

Sometimes, doing this work is hard because we get to know our writers, and watching them struggle with life's great difficulties hurts, especially when there's nothing we can do to make things easier for them. But, when we look around this office and see so many of those same young people — young men and women well on their way to becoming responsible adults, but who once struggled in the halls — it's like getting paid. It let's us come here every day and leave with smiles on our faces.

As this editor sits here early in the week typing this, across the desk from me is a young man who met The Beat when he was fighting his drug addiction at San Francisco's Y-Tech. He became their first graduate to work for us, and he's been here doing his work ever since. In addition to the work he does for us every week — he leads workshops in several county lock-ups and does most of the Spanish translations — he also goes to school, has a family, and continues to stay out of trouble as he builds a foundation for a future that does not include jail or prison.

At the next desk, another youngster who once sat in Beat workshops in San Mateo County. He wanted something better in his life than the gang activity that led to lock-up and to gunshot wounds, and asked if there was a spot for him here. That was five years ago, and he's been doing it here ever since. He types Beat pieces, prepares the Beat Without section, prints and folds Beats, and does so many other tasks on daily basis, it's hard for us to imagine getting through a week without him at our side.

At the desk behind where this editor sits, another young man who started as a Beat writer in YGC has taken on the role of supervising the many interns who come out of the Beat workshops to work here for several hours a week. This is no easy job because he has to keep account of all the units, and who is typing them. When a piece turns up missing (which happens), he is the one we turn to, and then he has to shake the place down to locate the missing piece (usually left on a desk somewhere else in the office and forgotten about... until he starts searching). He also is a workshop facilitator.

Across the desk from him sits a young woman who has just come to us from her lock-up, determined to make a difference in her life and in the Beat's life. She's made our life easier by the typing she does, but it is what she writes that is truly inspiring. She has dedicated herself to living a different life than the one that sent her to the hall, and we see her keeping that promise every day.

And there are many other examples of Beat interns and staff that come in at different times during the week, and many more who have passed through this place on their way to college, to jobs, to families and to a decent life.

Of course, it's not always smooth sailing. Life remains a challenge, whether you're committed to change or not. So, sometimes we see those who are trying their best to make a difference in their lives paying the price for some bad decision of the past, or slipping back into old habits that weren't good for their lives in the past and are still not good for them now. When that happens, we do what we

can to help them get back on track. Sometimes we can help; sometimes we can't. When we can't, we feel like we're part of a family who wants to help a son or daughter escape a bad situation without success, and it makes us sad. When we can, we feel like we're doing something good to help to pay back those who have helped us and themselves until they slipped.

In the end, like with everything else, it's in their hands whether they can stay out of the system or not. The Beat is just an opportunity, a place where they can feel safe (both in the office and in what is written inside), but the challenge is up to each individual to take or to ignore. We can help with questions about work, but once the young person walks out the office doors, then it's up to him or to her. It's hard enough for us to monitor our own lives, and that becomes each person's job, whether they were ever in the hall or not. Which is another way of saying you who are reading this may one day be sitting at one of these desks typing Beats, but you will still have to be the captain of your own lives, the person responsible for your own choices.

So, as much as we'd like to take credit for those who come out of the system and pass through The Beat office, it's not our accomplishment, but theirs that we celebrate. Whether you ever work with The Beat or not, you'll have the same need to take advantage of what's offered to you and face the consequences of your choices. We'd love to part of those choices, but that's not in our hands, it's in yours. All we can tell you is that many young people who — maybe like you — never thought they had a future and never knew how much they could accomplish, are doing it. Don't wait too long... You can do it, too!

Our topics this week produced another batch of super writing, starting with our first topic, "Saying No" — It's easy to say no to people we don't like or to offers that don't interest us. But have you ever had to say no to something you wanted, but knew you shouldn't have, or to someone you admire and love that was asking you to do something you knew was wrong? We're talking about those really difficult situations, when the only thing you have to back you up is your character, your integrity, your confidence in doing what is right — like saying no to a homie who wants you to do something that will get you into trouble, or saying no to a family member who is up to no good, or saying no to that temptation you really desire, but know is wrong. Have you ever summoned the courage and inner strength it takes to stand up in those situations and say no? Give us the details — the who, what, where, when and why.

Our second topic is always a difficult one to write about, "Grief" — What have you grieved over? When you lose someone you love — a family member, a homie, even a pet — how do you handle the pain? Is it a physical thing inside your body as well as something in your heart and head? How does loss affect you? Does the pain ever go away? Does it fade with time? Do you ever completely heal, or is it a wound you have forever? Have you found any effective ways of reducing the grief you feel when it comes? If so, how would you advise others who are grieving to help them get beyond it?

Remembering that The Beat is not the place to threaten revenge, tell us of a time when you experienced grief, and how it played out in your life.

And last, we asked our writers to tell us the "Best story ever" — We want you to tell us a story, your best story! We all have stories. Some are stupid or lame, some are incredibly courageous, some are fascinating, and others are absolutely funny. Of course, some are so sad they make you cry. Maybe one day you think of one story as "the best ever" and a different day — and a different mood — you think of another story as "the best ever." We want you to give it your best shot, and tell us your best story ever. And tell it right, with details that we can appreciate. We're all ears...

Those are the topics we presented, but there's more than just those topics in another first-class issue of this first-class magazine. There's the hearts of our writers and the hearts of our staff that keep The Beat moving. We thank you all.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Mi Historia

Mi historia es así. Recuerdo cuando estaba en Honduras y alusínaba a todos los que llegaban de los Estados Unidos porque yo era un vato pobre y también el lugar donde vivía. Yo decía que algún día iba a estar en los Estados Unidos para que vean que onda.

Cuando no tienes nada, todos te humillan, y se pasan contigo. Recuerdo que algunas veces yo iba a otras casas a ver la televisión o a dar un vuelta y me decía que me fuera. Yo me sentía bien triste y me daban ganas de llorar. Yo decía, "a la mierda con todo esto. Algún día voy a estar mejor que ellos." Mi vida ha sido así. Era un vato que me valía madre. Me iba con mis homies a beber y fumar mota.

Mi mama me decía, "mijo no hagas eso." Yo no tube a un pinche padre para que me mandara porque mi padre me negaba. Cuando mi madre me llevaba a la casa de él, él decía, "este muchacho no es hijo mío. Mi madre se ponía a llorar. Yo decía, "deseara estar grande para darle una palisa."

Yo decidí venirme a los Estados Unidos aún sabiendo que no iba a ser algo fácil. Yo dije, "a la madre con esto, yo me voy para la USA. Ahora estoy acá. Me ha ido bien nomas que ahora estoy en la cárcel. Tengo fe que pronto voy a salir de aquí para hacer lo que quiero. Esto si Dios me ayuda. Esta es mi historia.

From The Beat: Sola date cuenta de la cosas que pasastes cuando eras pequeño. Ahora ya eres mayor y tienes que pensar como una persona adulta. Pasastes por muchas humillaciones para que hayas llegado a terminar en este lugar. Tienes a tu madre viva, la quien ha sido padre y madre el mismo tiempo. Debería de tener eso en consideración cada vez que pienses en la loquera o en vender algo. No dejes que solo porque to tubistes una gía de padre, que arruine tu vida. Tu madre se merece mucho más que eso! Ella te necesita mucho, no le dejes abajo.

My Story

My story goes like this. I remember when I was in Honduras, I would envy all those who would come back to Honduras from the US because I was a poor guy so as the town I live in. I would say to myself that one day I was going to be in the US.

When you don't have nothing, everybody wants to humiliate you and punk you up. I remember I would go to my neirborhood's houses to watch TV and they would ask me to leave. I would feel very sad and made me cry. I would say, "the hell this, someday I'm going to be a in a better shape than them." My life has been like this. I was a guy who didn't care about anything. I would just go with my homies to drink and smoke.

My mom would say to me, "don't do that." I didn't have a father who would guide me because he didn't recognize I was his son. When my mom would take me to his house, he would deny me by saying, "this is not a son of mine." My mom would cry. I would say, "I wish I was bigger to kick his ass."

I decided to come to the US even though I did know it was very hard to do. I said, "the hell with this, I'm going to the US." Now I am here. Things have gone well for me, but the thing is that I am here. I have faith that soon I will get out from here to do what I want to do, if God help me. This is my story.

-Luis, San Francisco

From The Beat: Just realize the things you've gone through since very young. Now, you are older and you need to start thinking like an adult. You went though a lot of humiliation in your life to end up in this place. You still have your mother alive who have been a mother and a father in one. You should have that as consideration every time you think about drinking, getting high or selling drugs. Don't ruin your life because you didn't have the guidance of a father. You and your mother deserves more than this. She needs you so much, don't let her down.

I Should've Said No

I should've said no to cigarettes that led to smoking weed

I should've said no to drinking that led to losing my virginity

I should've said no to slangin' and went and got a job
I should've said no to bangin' and gave my life to God

I should've said no to ditching that led to dropping out
I should've said no and listened and made my momma proud

I should've said no I don't steal I know it's not right
I should've said no I don't pop pill's they'll mess up my mind

I should've said no to running away and stayed with my mom

I should've said no to leaving the bay here's not where I belong

I should've said no to committing a crime now I'm in jail
Now I'm doing do'in time I should've knew they would tell

I should've said no to running from that treatment center

I should've know it would've made my life worse not better

To a whole lot of things I should've said no
But I think sayin' yes help me know to say no

- Da Bay Girl, Land Of Enchantment

From the Beat: It's hard to believe that one simple word could have made such an impact on any one person's life. Now that you know about all the things you should have said no to, it's time to say yes to all the good that could be in your life.

Saying No and Saying Yes

I remember when I had to say no to school, but I said yes to smoke and drink I said no not to clean my room, but I said yes to gangbanging. I said no to listening to my mom, but I said yes to disrespect my mom. I said no to stay home, but I said yes to be in the system by the things I did. Only if I said no to all the bad things I wonder where I be?

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Wondering about the past is the beginning of thinking about the future. This is a fine piece of self-examination, and it will be even finer if that leads to different conclusions about the things you want to achieve in life, and the way you want to achieve them. It's pretty obvious that you know where one road leads, so we're hoping that knowledge will take you down a different road that leads away from where you are. Then we wonder where you'll be...

In Loving Memories To...

I wasted it all just to watch you grow into a fiend
Supported your addiction I regret doin' but I hope you're free
With no more struggles that you got to go through

In the middle of the night crying at my window

For another sack just to get high

Off that crack Nakisha why'd you have to die

I remember I shed a tear when my PO said

I couldn't go to your funeral when you were laying dead

Safe and sound surrounded by friends and family

My respect is shown to Shawn and Kapoloni

Who always showed their love.

-Crazy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow. You managed to say more about your love than we knew was possible for anyone to do. You can regret specifics, but you're right to never regret that kind of love. We wish you the best as you and everyone around you recover from this loss. RIP to your loved ones.

My heart still beats!

All the days of my life I seen people get hurt
 I was a very young teen trying to sell/ work
 My Mama getting pimped treated like dirt
 150 dollar she'll take off her skirt
 My big brother died in a fatal car crash,
 He was supposed to be a Laker, I was supposed to be a
 Dolphin

Now the only memory I have is seeing him in a coffin
 I never really had a home so I turned to the streets
 I started selling drugs screaming forget the police
 Poured some liquor on the curb saying RIP
 I had nobody in this world, nobody but me
 I remember when I slept on a park bench
 Police caught me smoking so I hid in a ditch
 My grandma taken medicine so she can live
 My aunt is 24 but got four kids

My grandpa is 62, and never meet his real mother
 His daughter 16 with a thrity-two-year-old lover
 All I'm trying to say is I've been through struggles
 Hurt to the point of carrying a gun, but
 Left it down on the ground kept in mind it could have
 been worse

I could have lost my life at birth lived on the streets with
 out cash

But here I am refusing to accept defeat

I'm locked up in jail now but my heart still beats.

-Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: You have not had an easy life thus far, we acknowledge, but from what you know and who you are, this should not stop you from bettering your life! Step up today and make this the moment where you begin to take charge in bettering your life and living free of the system! You can do it Reggie!! We appreciate the piece, and the courage you had to read this to the whole facility, particularly your peers! Stay in touch!

Grieving

I'm grieving every day but the person I grieve for is still alive, but is dying every day and it's the hardest thing watching you own dad dying a little every day.

Now that I'm locked up it's like a hundred times worse, because I can't even see him and hug him every day.

I'm gonna do a year, and I know there won't be a second that goes by that I won't think about him. It hurts so badly because my dad don't have a lot of people that are there every day for him.

When I'm out before I leave the house I make him food, tell him I love him, and always come back to him. With him still alive is what's gonna get me through my time because I know I will be laying with him again watching "Law and Order." We will forget about every thing bad in my life, because my dad is the best thing in my life.

- Jonathan, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: We at the Beat are sorry to hear about your father, keep us posted on how he is doing. He will be in our thoughts and prayers for better health.

Saying No

One day I was with my boyfriend and his friends and my friends and we were hang out and it was late. They were smoking and they asked me if I wanted to smoke. I said now, and they said "just smoke, come on", and my boyfriend was like, "hit the weed". I said no because I don't like to smoke, and they just kept sayin' "smoke one time, just for us please?" and I kept saying hell naaw. That night they were mad. But so what, I didn't care.

-Shaney, Alameda

From The Beat: Shaney, this is a great story about resisting peer pressure and saying no. Good for you!

Listen!

This Drew, back up in here once again. Today I been thinking about how people don't pay attention. When I was up in here during the Beat, my ninja "P" was talking about some real life shhh, and it seemed like none of these ninjas was paying attention. That's why so many people come up in here, 'cause they don't pay attention to what people be talking 'bout.

I can't say I was never like that before, but all that was in the past. Now I be listening to everything people got to say. My mans came up here speaking the truth and you could tell some of these people be up in here not knowing shhh.

Some of these ninjas be talking about some clown-ass shhh, but don't ever take the time out to listen to some real shhh. I'm just sayin', take time out and listen to what people got to say instead of running your mouth and not even soaking up none of the game that some of these ninjas that been through this shhh is trying to provide.

I'm just sayin', though, that's real. You have to open your mind, but at the same time open your ears.

-Drew, San Francisco

From The Beat: What we love about this piece is that you are listening to what others have to say. We agree with you: too many people (young and old) think they already know everything they need to know, and don't need to learn what others have learned the hard way. What we hate about this piece is that you are here, again! Is this the last time? If you're really listening, the answer will be, "Yes!"

Cryin' Tears

Momma cryin' tears

Daddy not hear

That crazy life to me is real

Clear

And never showing fear

Pray for me till I go

To mother Guadalupe for better days for me bro

Writin' my thoughts in The Beat

Sheddin' blood, sweat an' tears every week

Too many fallen casualties and blood flowing on
 concrete

Bloom like a rose, but my life is part of the thorns

My heart no longer feels emotion...

They were badly ripped out an' torn

The devil say I'm goin down to him

'Cause I live the life of sin

Too many dark days and nightmares that I hold within

My bloody life I live through

Scars and tattoos

Kinda of quiet, kinda of rude

But what can this cholo do

Mi nombre is Gangsta Shadow so that's why I accept
 darkness

Might end up six feet 'cause I'm a walking target

Cuete to my dome, I yell out I'll rest in peace

Tears from my homies and family and they watch my
 blood leak

-G Shadow, San Francisco

From The Beat: We wish we could protect you, GS, from your "enemies," from the streets, from your own past, and from yourself. There have been many young men that have come through these workshops who want to write their stories as books, but who don't really have the skills — or the patience — that it takes to do the hard work of writing, of editing, of thinking. You have those skills, and yours would be a book we would read. So, find the time (and the self-protection) to give us what we want. Your experiences, how you analyze them and draw conclusions from them, could benefit a whole lot of people, turning you from Gangsta Shadow into a true teacher. We will miss you. (We could not end this piece with your RIP. You are too alive in our hearts for that.)

He Is A Him—Who Is I?

Who is he?

Is he him? Or is he I?

He is a 17-year-old guy

He is 17, going on to 18 in the halls

He is locked up in the box of four block walls

He is a him who remembers lots of memories

He remembers when he first started smoking trees

His first experience was in a car in Santa Venetia

Rolling in the streets

Hot boxing and bumping (our group's) beats

He remembers when he first got arrested

For possession of a deadly weapon

It wasn't dark yet--there was still sun

He didn't try to run

He got one of his first felonies

He was trying to put it down with the homies

Kicking it with the OGs

Sipping on the 40s

He remembers trying crystal meth for the first

He is a him who liked it, but it was the worst

He was drunk and tired

But after he hit the glass crystal pipe

He got wired

He is a him who remembers getting his second felony

For assault with a deadly weapon

He heard the sirens, so he tried to run

He is a him who remembers getting his first tatt

He got the tatt on his back

He was on the bracelet when he got that

He is a him who remembers drinking every day

From Coronas, Mickey's, OEs, 211s, to hard alcohol

Kicking it at the park with a homie

It was bright and sunny

He is a him who remembers having to keep trucha

(strong) for other gangbangers

He hung with drug addicts and slangers

He has a lot more memories

He remembers when he was younger

'Til this day, sometimes people say

He looks like a youngster

This he that's a him is now a gangster

He remembers when he didn't have to worry 'bout
another gang

But now he goes to people and ask what they bang

He remembers when he was a sober little boy

He used to play with a gun toy

His mother used to always yell at him

"Ya métate" (get in), and he would yell, "Okay, ya voy."
(I'm coming)

He remembers when he didn't have any worries 'bout
gangs or drugs

He played in the dirt, stepping on worms and slugs

But now every time this him walks in the streets

He gives mean mugs

Who is this he or him?

He or him is I

-Shy Boy, Marin

From The Beat: You've written a real but sad poem about how you've evolved so far, but the insights in your poem show that now you've grown into this gangster, it hasn't made you very happy. If not, do think you can maneuver your life around so you won't have to represent anyone else but yourself and you won't have to care who anybody else represents? How would it be to walk the streets and forget having to mean mug anybody else and even be able to smile at strangers?

Drugs Make You Dumb

If you are a kid that is less than 18, and you are thinking about doing drugs, you shouldn't. Doing drugs is one of the most dumbest things you can do in your life. The only reason drugs are used is to fit in, but people who use drugs all the time will end up being dumb. Even if you don't think it's true, but it is.

Even people who are having a hard time as being a teen shouldn't turn to doing drugs because, in the long run, it would affect you majorly.

-Reese, San Francisco

From The Beat: We totally agree with you, Reese. We've seen too many smart young people hurt their lives for years and years because they thought they could control their drug habits. But in the end, their drug habits controlled them. In fact, we think your advice is not just for teens, but for anyone who messes up their minds and bodies with chemical cocktails.

A Little Bit About Me

By the time I was in my mid teens I had been in many programs, and had been on probation three times. I blew out of most of these, and did my own thing. Sometimes I was required to go to school and be compliant, but usually I hung out, got high, and lived the street life.

Street life has an addictive quality all of it's own. No one is there to tell you what to do. Drugs are everywhere and other kids become like brothers and sisters.

Once you are caught up into that way of life it's hard to pull away from it. Many times the state of New Mexico stepped in and said I was having way too much fun, and needed a little more structure. I disagreed and this basic difference in opinion resulted in my numerous incarcerations. Three to thirty days was the normal length of my stay; between these visits I would try to do good.

The last time I even got my GED and had a good job, but like all the other times I ended up back on the streets. I was caught; I always got caught, and was hauled back to jail.

-Julian, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Now that you know the way of life you were living will only get you back in jail, maybe it's time to change and live a life off the streets and away from crime and drugs. You have one of two choices live the good life or go back to the street life.

Grandpa Geno

Something I grieved dearly over was the loss of my grandfather. He was the closet person I had in life except for my mother. My grandpa got cancer and fell real sick. He didn't want a funeral, he just wanted to be cremated and have his ashes tossed in the Bay.

His last wish was to watch the 49ers beat the Packers at Candlestick. Sad to say, he died the day they were gonna play. But with me loving my grandfather so much, when he died, we kept him in his room. I locked the door and put my grandfather in an upward position. I sat through the whole game with my dead grandfather, and some place, somewhere, someone answered my grandfather's wish 'cause in 2004 at Candlestick that night the Niners won that game.

The loss of my grandfather was too much to bear, and from that day on, I haven't believed there's a god.

-Fed-up Gloss, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is one of the most moving tributes we've ever read. Of course, death is the natural end for us all, so it is not so much your grandfather's passing, but the effect it's had on you that we feel so strongly. We can't imagine what you were feeling as you sat next to him in that locked room watching the Niners beat the Packers. Can we ask you if your loss of faith in the existence of god has changed anything about how you live your life?

Losing My Grandma

I lost my grandma-slash-mom a couple weeks ago.

I lived with her 15 of my 17 years of age. I called her mom and called my mother by her name. Anyways one thing that made me feel so bad is I don't cry or nothing and that made me feel awkward... but later I found out that it probably didn't hit me yet because I'm in jail.

-Lil' Dj, Alameda

From The Beat: Grief is a funny thing - it happens at its own pace. You've been going through the pain of this loss in different ways since it happened, right? Writing about it, feelin' it, getting angry, talking about it... this is all part of how we cope with loss. But we bet your grandma would be really proud if she could see how much love you show her, and how much respect.

Takin' One For The Team

The day my brotha died was
the worst day of my life
seeing my brother in the casket killed me inside

I was never the same

And never will be the same again

I wish I could have took his take his place

In that casket but either way my dad

Would have lost a son but sometimes

You gotta take one for the team

I changed sometimes I think I probably wouldn't

Be in this situation if I hadn't lost him

Losing him made me say screw the world

But even though killin' happens so much

You would think it ain't a thang... but it ain't

That's my brother!

Wendell Stevenson I miss you big bra and I

Know you missin' me Rest in Peace

-Jamil, Alameda

From The Beat: You know, as tragic as it is that you lost your brother, it would be even more tragic if you DID think "It ain't a thang", because there's one thing worse than a broken heart: A person that has no heart left. From all you've written and shared, we know that will never happen to you.

Best Story Ever

This my best story ever.

It's about making myself better.

Me bein' me, yeah everybody see!

But what else can I be.

I know what I see.

Me runnin' the streets doin' what I'm not 'posed to do!

Runnin' behind my friends sayin', "I wanna go too."

I know I was wrong; I know I should've been home!

But naw, not me! I was out late night

Comin' in the house three and four in the morning high
is a kite!

"I told you, stop comin' in my house so late!"

"Mom, I was with my friends. We was on a double date!

I'm sorry, Mom," that's what I'll say!

But yet, the next day I make the same mistake!

It took me a while to ask myself how!

Putting my mama down, I had to make a big turn around.

Well, that's what I said. Yet, take a look at me now!

But it's cool. When I touch down I'ma go to school. I

promise! Yeah, it's me Kia, I'ma do this!

-Kia, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you keep the promise you make in this fine poem, it will be the best story ever. It's important to do this for your mom, of course. But it's even more important for you to do it for yourself. School is the key to the life you want to live. Don't hand over another day of your freedom to these cages!

Nothing But Pain

Growing up mayne, it was nothing but pain.

When I first opened my eyes

I was caught up in the game.

As a kid I had a pet mouse.

'Cause moms was an addict and she never cleaned the
house. Slowly but surly I was heading down a route as a
bad kid.

But that nothing compared to what dad did.

He would leave to the bars late night and just have a
drink.

Moms was too drunk so she couldn't really think.

Pops was a liar and a cheater

on top of that he was a wife and kid beater.

Growing up I met some partners wit' the same pain that
I felt.

But they weren't on the side of my dad's belt.

So I couldn't run to them for help.

And I couldn't leave my brothers.

And I couldn't leave my mother.

Even though she was drunk I still had to love her.

So I took force.

And started robbing people with no remorse.

Later mom and pops had a divorce.

Which set my course.

And that's bound to the block for life.

-Chris, Alameda

From The Beat: Of all the terrible things you describe in this incredible poem, the most tragic is the last two lines, where you talk as if there's no way to change your future. Go back over your own words and read how much skill and insight went into the rhymes you write. Are those the words of a person doomed to the jailhouse or the cemetery? No way - you have way too much intelligence, and awareness to be a victim of the block. Just the opposite, you could be the sort of leader who helps young people in your position find ways of using their talents in a positive way. But first Chris, you have to save yourself. How are you going to do that?

Living My Life Part 2

Imagine how some pills

Will make you feel ready to kill for any will

Not even for a cause just to do it

Don't that make you ruthless

Robbing and selling dope that's how it go

I don't know about u but that's all I know

Like I told y'all the first time living my life ain't easy as
you think it is

Some times your water get turned out your family
struggles but that's ok

I tell my momma some day we gone make it out the
hood

But I'm just a paper chaser

So some nights I stay out trying to get money

But momma I'm sorry that I worry you the way I do

Doing things I know I shouldn't do

Living life like there's no tomorrow

Showing no sympathy

What's gotten into me

Some times I be wishing God won't wake me up the next
morning

Some people tell me I'm crazy but that's just how it be

That's all I gotta say holla at y'all next week.

-Lil' Damani, Alameda

From The Beat: Why do you feel like it has to be that way? Cause in reality it doesn't have to be that way. You make your life the way you want to make it. Of course we can understand if you're living in poverty but there's several ways out. There's several ways to get money without selling drugs, or taking chances with your freedom. If you take the quick route, you'll quickly come back to jail. And you won't be living at home you would be living in a cell, without any kind of hustle and no funds.

Grief

When my uncle died, I grieved for months. So this is the story:

I'm at school waitin' for my mom to come and pick me up, and she told me that we needed to pick up my younger cousins. So we in the car, and we pull up to my grandma's house and we see hella recognizable cars. So we walk into the house and we see my grandma sittin' in the chair crying. All the adults came into the living room, and my grandma stops crying. She tells us that my uncle drowned in Lake Berryessa trying to retrieve his boat that got lost in the current.

After I heard that my uncle drowned, I walked out of the house and broke down. So we got home and all I did was go into my room and cried. So, when the funeral came around, everybody just cried the whole time. My cousin got up to speak upon my uncle, and he couldn't even finish because he broke down and started crying.

Even now, I still think about my uncle. The pain will never go away. I loved my uncle to death. When grief comes, I just listen to music and cry myself to sleep.

-KNHWJ, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for writing so beautifully about your uncle's passing, and the pain you still feel whenever you think about him. It reminds us that not all the RIPs we read are related to violence and street wars. We like your method of dealing with your pain, which is to listen to music and to cry. We know you will always feel some pain when you think of your uncle, but we also know that time will help to make the pain bearable. We hope you find a way to keep yourself free and to live a long life so that you can pass the memory of your uncle on to the next generation.

The New Joann

Well, I'm back up in here Beat, and I'm stressin' hella much. I'm here for a warrant, and its my 6TH time here. I haven't caught no new case in two years, though, and I'm not gone be here for that long. But being here, period, is stressful.

I have a warrant because I got terminated from this one transitional home, and I've been on the run since. I should be getting out soon to go to another transitional home, and this time I'm stayin'. I'ma do my best to not get kicked out.

It's about that time, and partying and having fun needs to stop. I'm 17 now and in no time soon I'ma be 18. Once I hit 18, I'm on my own and I'd rather get my shhh together now before I become an adult and use everything the system is offering to make my life better.

I finally realized that I'm too talented and smart to just throw my life away. I want to be something — not that I ain't now — but I wanna finish school, become a lawyer, and start a family with my boyfriend Rob. This childish shhh, running them streets, sellin' these drugs, and doin' it ain't makin' my life better, but makin' it worse. It also is makin' it harder for me to achieve my goals and is keeping me away from who I love.

From this day on I'm a new Joann. I mean it too. Because I'm changing because I want to change. I'm changing for me and my future.

I'm out Beat! Y'all will be seeing me when I get out because I'ma come visit and, plus, I need a JOB!

-Joann, San Francisco

From The Beat: Wow, Girl, this is one of the most inspiring pieces we've read in a long, long time — your own Declaration of Independence from a life that you don't want and isn't getting you anywhere. And we know you mean it because you're now sitting at a desk right here at The Beat doing what you said you were going to do. Oh yes, indeed, you are much too smart and much too talented to be taking orders from a bunch of strangers who can't possibly appreciate just what you have to offer. Yes, finish school (and finish with the life that leads you to lock up), and you can achieve anything you set your mind to — lawyer, doctor, President! This is a great piece, and it gives us great pleasure knowing that you're now working at The Beat!

Saying No

I need to say no to getting in trouble, because every time I say yes I end up getting caught by the police. And then I get locked up. I don't like going through this, and putting my family under stress.

I been locked up for nine months. It was the worst time of my life. I just think back what I should do. I should stop and think before I do anything. I miss my family so much. I cry most of the time that I am in here.

I would say no to drugs, gangs and violence. It all leads up to jail where you can't see your family. You are told what to do and when to do it. I want to get a job and earn money the right way and be with my family again.

-Li' Jon, San Francisco

From The Beat: When you lose your freedom and are taken away from the family that you love, and that loves you, then crying is an appropriate response. We admire your courage for saying so, because most boys in your situation also cry, they just don't admit it. So we can see that you have a strength to be honest with yourself, and that strength is something to use for your future. When you walk out of here, cut this piece out and tape it to your bedroom wall so that you will never forget how you felt, and never give in to the many temptations that will come your way. If you follow your own fine advice and keep the promises you make in this piece, your life will change for the better.



Hard To Say No

Some people find it easy to say no, but also to some people, it can be very hard to say no. Some people are accustomed to doing what's right, so saying no is very normal. But some people's mind mentality is very weak. Plus the amount of peer pressure adds on to the weak-minded so they fall into the trap with their peers.

But the fact is that the weak-minded need to find a way to boost your mentality so you can find a way to do the right thing or you'll end up in here like me!

I'm ghost, ya heard. (This betta be in piece of the week.)

-Yung Skippah, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you've put your finger on something very important, which is that different people grow up with different realities. As children, we all follow the models we see around us, and that means when our models are doing "bad" then we tend to follow them, and when our models are doing "good," we tend to follow those models. But, because there are consequences for everything, we all have to pay the price for our actions. (Of course this is a piece of the week because you thought about the topic and wrote seriously.)

My Loss

When my homeboy died I was really sad because we was kicking it with him that same day.

Everything was fine until I went home. He left to go and kick it with his boy then something bad happen to me after people came there and shot at him. Six bullets came thru his back and he dropped but they didn't stop. They got out of the car and shot him three more times in the face.

When I heard about that I was really sad because I was with him that same day and we were just talking about what we was about to do with our tree.

I was really sad when that happen, so I went out and did bad things to cope over his death. But I knew I did wrong and at his funeral I wanted to change because I didn't want to get shot at and killed at a young age. My partner was only 17 and he will always be remembered. RIP White Joe

-Lil' Tn, Alameda

From The Beat: It's unfortunate that you had to lose a friend in such a horrible way. Sometimes it is those closes to us that we are forced to learn from their mistakes. We are blessed that you have matured from such a troubling encounter.

Baby Mama

Being a "baby mama", and having a "baby daddy" is so overrated. All of these young "adults" go around talking about 'my baby mama this and my baby daddy that'. But half of them don't know anything about those few words.

I am someone's baby mama and trust me it ain't anything special. And I got a baby daddy, and he ain't anything special. I was 15 and pregnant, he was 23. I am now almost 18 and he is almost 26. My daughter is almost 2. He doesn't do anything for my daughter. My baby daddy ain't nothing but a broken down wannabe "pimp".

And he thinks that since I'm the baby mama he can get anything he wants from me. He is always saying "yo my baby mama, so why can't I get some of that cream?" or "you're my baby mama so you should always have my back."

-The King's Wife, Alameda

From the Beat: He sounds like a piece of work. At least he's not your boyfriend or husband, that would likely be even worse. What's important now is your future and your daughter's future. Focus on that. Thanks for being real about baby mamas and baby daddies.

My Pain

My grandma Frankie has just past away on the nineteenth of March of 2008. Her death hasn't hit me yet, 'cause there so much going on during this period in my life.

The day after I found out my grandma past I got arrested and taken to Juvenile Hall. Everything was happening at once. My court date was on my birthday March 24, 2008; I got detained on that day, that didn't feel good. It was the worst present I ever got.

After enduring all that, my grandma was still gone. I hadn't seen my grandma in like five months or talked to her. And getting that phone call from my dad that my grandma was dead made me feel bad that I hadn't made an effort to talk to her or see her. Those chances are gone now. And being in Juvenile Hall made it all worse. My dad the son of my grandma was coming up to my pretrial.

-Romero, Alameda

From The Beat: No one knows what tomorrow brings. It kind of creeps up on you. The most important thing in life is life itself. The fact of the matter you're still here is your daily reward and gift from a higher power. There are going to be obstacles in this life in the pursuit of your advancement what determines your fate is how you react to it.

He Said "Well Get Ready"

It's hard to say no sometimes because I remember one time back when I was 12 I was with my friend and she wanted to go to her boyfriend's house.

I couldn't say no because she was my best friend so I went with her and she didn't tell me her boyfriend's brother was going to be there.

So I will admit he was cute but I just wasn't ready to do what all my friends were doing. She told me to go in the room with him. I didn't want to, but I did 'cause I didn't know what my friends would think of me if I didn't.

So I went in the room, and he was like "You ready?" I said "No."

"Well," he said, "Get ready."

I said "No," but he kept talking to me saying it's going to be ok and my friend came in and said go head girl don't be scared, so I said ok... and next thing you know the "yadidamean" happened.

It was really hard for me to say no.

-Ericka, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing this story, Ericka. We're sorry that your "friend" put you in this situation. Twelve years old is way too young to be alone with a group of young people who don't know how to show respect, and we can see how it would have been hard to say no with that kind of pressure all around you. You deserved better treatment then, and you deserve better treatment now!

... my baby's mom accidentally gets shot and loses my child.

Just Say No

Put down that
Blunt. You know you got court.

Just say no!

Put down the Glock
25 to life it aint worth it.

Just say no!

See the keys in that whip? You know you going to get
blurped.

Just say no!

If you know you gonna get caught up...

Just say no!!!

-David, Alameda

From The Beat: It's obvious! You couldn't say "no." Right?

Some Things In Life Are Hard To Get Over

I been going through pain since my closest goon got killed. If only that bullet would've never went through, my young goon would still be getting on beanies.

Then, before I can try to get over that, my baby's mom accidentally gets shot and loses my child. Then I go down for the gun being mine. So now a ninja really hot.

Now my little teenage brother tryna be wit' it, and to make it worse, I might not get out no time soon. But things are hard yo get over.

-TP, San Francisco

From The Beat: These things would be hard for anyone to get over. One thing you should know, though, and that is that if you had been an adult and the gun you should not have had killed someone, they could charge you with murder, and you could be facing the death penalty! This won't help you with your grief (we don't know how to help you with that), but it will give you something to think about.

Cuando Era Pequeño

Cuando yo era pequeño, me lebantaban a las cinco a traer un caballo, después me mandaban a darles agua a las vacas. Despues me llebaban a trabajar. Yo trabajaba sembrando maiz y en las tardes me iba para el campo.

En el campo nos poníamnos a jugar soccer con mis amigos. Despues de jugar, me bañaba y me iba a ver a las nenas. En la noche me iba a jugar billar.

Cuando tenía 10 años, me vine para los EEUU, estuve 22 días en camino para llegar acá. Me acuerdo el hambre que aguantaba. Cuando llovía, aguantaba frío. Donde llegaba la noche, dormía. Cuando ya no teníamos dinero, le tenía que pedir a la gente y veces me daban y aveces no. Una vez, estábamos esperando el tren en la tardes, y llegaron unos vatos y nos robaron con armas. Me quitaron los zapatos, la faja, la feria y la chamarra.

Me acuerdo cuando venía descalzo y me toco pedir zapato porque me dolían los pieces. Traía zapatos, pero me asaltaron. Luego llegamos a la frontera, tome al coyote y pasamos dos días y dos noches durmiendo en el decierto. Desde ahí, llegue a Fitness, Arizona. Me tenían castigado porque trate de escaparme y a los 7 días me llegaron a recoger mi familia. Ahí, me dieron trabajo desde los 10 años. Trabaje en pintura.

From The Beat: Se nota que pasastes por muchas cosas en tu trayecto hacia acá. Lo bueno de todo esto fue que lograstes venir aca, pero no te sirvió de mucho. Tienes que buscar la forma de tomar en cuenta las cosas que se te hicieron difícil de obtener. Hay otros que no lograron hacerlo como tu lo hicistes. Si vas a luchar por algo, hazlo pero también mantenlo.

When I Was Younger

When I was younger, I would get up at 5 in morning to pick up a horse and feed cows with water. Later, I would go to work. I used to work planting corn and in the afternoon, I would go to the camp.

In campo, we would play soccer with my friends. After playing, I would take a shower and then go see the girls. At night, I would go play billiard.

When I was 10 years old, I came to the US, and I spent 22 days on the road coming here. I remember when I suffer from hunger. When it rained, I suffered from coldness. When the night would hit, I'll stay and sleep. When we didn't have money, I would ask the people. And sometimes they would give me and sometimes they won't. One time, we were waiting for the train at night, and a few guys came over with guns. They took my shoes, my belt and my jacket.

I remember that when I came without shoes, I had to ask for shoes because my feet started to hurt. Later, we ended up in the border; I met the Coyote, and spend two days and nights in the desert. Then, I ended up in Fitness, Arizona. They had me punished because I tried to run away from the Coyote. My family came to pick me up. And there, I worked as the age of 10. I worked as a painter.

-Juan San Francisco

It's noticeable that you went through a lot to come here. Good things about this is that you made it, but not for long. You need to find a way to take care of the things that were hard for you to get. There are others who didn't make it as far as you did. If you are going to fight hard for something, do it, but also keep it.

When I was 10 years old, I came to the US, and I spent 22 days on the road coming here.

Gold Eyes

Now I done shed a few tears through these bloodshot eyes
 My minds playin tricks it's like the devil in disguise
 Tryin' to get on and move forward in my life
 Now who the hell said a real g don't cry
 Hugging on my son through this thick glass
 Tryin' to do some good but I'm feeling like I'm trapped
 Thinking 'bout a casket while I'm laying on my back
 Feeling like I'm headed towards Quentin and that's that
 We all getting wrapped up in this ruthless lil' game
 Thinking that we playin' but we the ones that's getting played
 By this cold hearted system
 They thinking I'm a suspect but I really feel like a victim
 But screw it I'm gonna brush it off my shoulder
 'Cause what don't kill me can only make me stronger
 Feelin' sorry for myself no longer
 Still gon' be me through this thick and this thin
 Put it down for my homies and my kin
 I gets it how I live they call me Noey
 Posted on the block wit a short pack of 'pots
 Or posted on the porch with them flamed up homies
 Blowin' on this purple while we sippin' on them 40's
 Thinking 'bout the days we was running from the police
 Now I'm solo on this watch
 Posted on the block
 Running from them boys with them bundles in my socks
 If I see an enemy it's in my nature to get 'em
 So I stay on my toes it's just how I be living
 I don't be slappin' females but I swear I be pimping
 So I'm gonna set it off on this last lil' note
 Reppin' for my baby you know who you can toast

-Lil Noey

From The Beat: You got an angel in yo' song and a devil on yo' shoulda/ with every act of violence this world it gets colda/ if you have a talent for rhymes that mesmerize/ and a baby looking up in a daddy's eyes/ why waste it on this life that's no life at all/ it's yo' choice: You stand on your own true feet - or fall.

Modern-Day Slavery

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing again this week. I ain't feeling none of these topics this week, so I'ma come of the head with something. I'm go write about once you get caught up in the system,

Man, once you get caught up, it's ugly. This shhh is modern-day slavery. Uncle Sam is our masters. He just holdin' us here waiting for the next highest bidder (group homes) to buy and come get us.

They treat us like damn animals once they get us. So we do the same thing Harriet Tubman did, which is run. That's all I got to say this week.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: There are many similarities between how the slaves were treated and how you are treated once you're in these cages. But there are also many differences which you need to acknowledge. For one thing, you're here for something you did, and not for something you are. You weren't born into the system, you made some choices that put you here. As for Harriet Tubman, she risked her life to end slavery and better the lives of all black people in this country. That makes her a hero. What have you done or do you plan to do that is heroic? We would like you to spell that out for us, because heroes are exactly what's needed.

My Gift

I wake up and realize something is wrong,
 my body's feeling different.
 I wake up at night to find myself sicker then ever.
 Before I know it the test is coming out positive.
 All I can think of is what's he gonna say?
 Will he stay with me or will he leave out of fear?
 My life strikes cold and I feel one single tear.
 The truth is out he knows, his face gets a big bright smile
 and says I have a family now. Tears of joy flood my face, and
 now I am finally happy.

- Shay, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It is hard to hear about our children having children, but now that you are having a child change your ways and live for your unborn child. Your child needs his/her parents, so now it's time to step up and stay out of detention.

My Real Friend

What's good with it, Beat? Me, Ant still here living in this hellhole! I'm dedicating this one to my moms.

You want to know about a real friend, I'm gone tell you. The only true friend and homie that me and a lot of ninjas locked up on the outs got is their mother! Just think about this: who there for you when you feeling down? Moms who there for you when you sick and not capable to go get you some medicine. Moms, this one right here, is the top one. Who the first person you call when you get locked up? Moms!

All through your life when you mad and sad, what's the main line you here ninjas say when shhh is bad... "I want my mama!"

-Lil' Ant, San Francisco

From The Beat: You are so right, Ant. And you know what, it never changes no matter how old you get. And when your mom is no longer around, that's when you're really going to know what a true friend she was because you're never going to stop missing her. So now's the time to give back some of what she's sacrificed for you, and what she's going to continue to sacrifice for you. Now's the time to start thinking of how you can pay back, by not doing the things that let "them" take you away from her. She loves you very much.

We In Hell

I'm stressin' in this shady place, but not just for me but for all my ninjas that went down with me, especially my baby. I mean, damn, do these jerks actually think us kids that come in and out the system wanna do what we do? Hell no we don't.

Damn! Every day I look around I see a pretty-ass girl that wear a smile, but really underneath that smile is worry and stress. We good-ass kids caught up in the system. I mean, damn, it ain't our fault some of our momma was on crack and showed us the wrong way.

But man, we live to survive and survive to die. And while we live, we struggle. I hope after life on earth is paradise because we in hell.

-Demetrius, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course you can't be blamed for the life you were born into, or the "wrong" things you learned coming up. But there comes a time when you have to take control of your own life and take responsibility for your own decisions. The child can be forgiven; the adult pays the price. So, examine those values you learned as a child and figure out what you want in life. If it doesn't include being at the mercy of strangers, then make a real plan to achieve what you hope to achieve in a way that protects your freedom and your future.

Getting' Played

Man, this shhh is bullshhh. My PO is tryin' to play me. The judge already said that the PO has the right to release me, and he still don't want to let me out. He keep tryin to find any excuse to not let me out, like he said my mom don't got insurance to pay for my sleepin' meds. I told him I don't need that to go to sleep on the outs.

The reason I can't sleep in here is because I keep thinkin' about my family — Mom is okay or not or how long I'ma be down for, and that's all I think about all night. My PO needs to stop BSin' and let me out 'cause im 18 already, and I got plans for when I get out, long term and short goals.

Well, that's all now.

-Kizzer One, San Francisco

From The Beat: Are the meds the only reason your PO isn't recommending release? If so, it's one of those Catch-22 situations: Since you're locked up, you need help falling asleep; but since you need help falling asleep, they won't let you get out! (In the book, "Catch-22," the main character said he wanted to get out of the military because the war was making him crazy. But there was a rule that said, "If you want to get out of the military, that proves you aren't crazy.") We'd love to read what some of your short and long-term goals are, and how you plan to achieve them. We hope your PO relents, and that you get out soon.

Pain And Grief

What's good with it, Beat? It's ya boy Lil' G coming out of that max unit. Anyways, I just want to start by sayin' that there's all types of different pain that people such as myself experience every day. Man, does it hurt.

I've experienced pain by losing loved ones, being vulnerable to females, getting shot, and many other ways. And trust me, pain hurts, as we all know. Me, myself, can't stand pain. I hate it. Especially mental pain, meaning being hurt inside, in my heart.

Physical pain hurts, but feel me... like I said, I been shot before, and it didn't hurt, not because I'm trying to be big and bad, but because I was thizzing hard as hell. And the one thing the big homies say is, "Don't get caught slippin'". Man I should've listened. But forget it, it's nothin', this lil' wake-up call for when I'm on the outs!

Anyways, to all locked up in this place, keep ya head up and keep it trucha. I'm outtie.

-TRL, San Francisco

From The Beat: After experiencing so much pain, what do you do to protect yourself from further pain? If thizzing kept you from feeling pain, did it also keep you from acting responsibly, putting you in danger of being hurt? Can you think of ways that would make your life less dangerous, whether you're doing those things or not? (We had to change your Beat name

My Life Chose Me

What's up with The Beat? It you boy Grimy still up in here. But what I got to say is my life chose me when I was just a little kid. Pops was in and out of my life. I lived with drug dealers, seeing people fight. My house was getting shot up, so I seen that and I got into it.

Started selling drugs, smoking weed and getting locked up, but really I didn't care 'cause I was living that gangbanging life and that's what was making my life so difficult. But I was crazy in the head, so when I did the things that I did, that means that my life was chosen for me.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: The truth is that nobody can choose their childhood. We're all born into certain circumstances, and we all have to play the cards that are dealt us as children. So, we agree with you that you only did what you saw being done all around you. But the difference between being a child and being an adult is that the adult can make choices, can decide either to live or not to live the kind of life that was handed to him as a child. Yes, life chose you as a child; but now that you're a young adult, what life will you choose for yourself?

Grief

Yo, yo, yo! What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Na-Na. Most of y'all know me, but yeah, I'm talking 'bout my ninja... well, actually my favorite big homie R.B.

Man, I miss my ninja. He was like a father figure to me. He put me on when I didn't have nothin' but a couple dollars in my pockets so I could stay out of trouble and above waters and don't get drowned fo' real. Brah was a role model and now he gone.

But you know Na-Na gone hold it down for the crown. I'm sayin' this to say that's my grief and that I don't want to see nobody die, even if they my enemies. So I'm out, Beat.

-Na Na, San Francisco

From The Beat: We don't know how we would deal with the grief that comes with the life. But we admire you for understanding that you are the one feeling the pain, not R.B., and that revenge only creates pain in those left behind, whether they're your homies or your enemies. And, when you look honestly at the situation, those feelings of grief are just another reminder that what connects us as human beings is greater than what separates us. We're sorry you have to bear the pain of your loss.

Finding Inner Peace

What's up Beat? It's another week and I'm that much older, wiser, stronger and happier. I'm able to deal with my shhh a lil' better because I have to learn from my thoughts or situation that I have been through throughout the week.

I've almost achieved that inner happiness that I have been searching for. Once my eyes have opened to the situations or predicaments, or say the world around me — once I opened my eyes — dealing with problems or difficulties becomes easy.

I am able to find the joy in any situation. There is good to everything that happens in this world, no matter how dark it may appear. If you search, you may find, I believe. So that is why no matter how long this time I'm serving becomes, every week makes me that much better, I am able to grasp the goodness.

Anyways, times up Beat. Hope you enjoyed.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: We always enjoy reading you, Bakgwai. You are a thinker and that is what we want all our writers to be. Next time, maybe you can spell out some of the wisdom you've added to your arsenal, and give us some examples of how you are better today than you were yesterday. Better yet, tell us how you will be even stronger, happier and better tomorrow...

What I See

Everybody was born with choice and opportunity. The stuff that's going on in the streets is nothing new to me. They supply us guns and drugs in our community. They like seeing us battle, but what we need is unity.

I'm in jail and I want to get released. I see a lot of violence but I'm trying to find peace. People getting killed in these Oakland streets. Ninjas don't feel safe that's why they holding heat. If you from the wrong street you'll be knocked in your teeth or maybe blown off your feet. You hear about someone getting killed about every other week. Every year the killing rate in Oakland is increased.

-Kwame, Alameda

From The Beat: It make one wonder, what has this world come to? What are we living for if killing each other is our reality? When will all of this madness stop? Or is it too late to change this thing we know as the game?

Best Story Ever

My best story ever is my life. Even though many people say they have no story, that's not true.

My life started from the point I remember, back when I was really young, maybe about five or six. I was really a shy person. From then, I have changed in a way I never imagined. I remember when I started middle school. I was in a private school. Besides that I was also in a after-school program and I was a really unhappy. Later on my mom finally realized that I really didn't need it.

Throughout my middle school years, I maintained a 3.83 GPA. Once I hit high school, I started screwing up. I made a bad mistake and I ended up in juvey. I wish I didn't mess up, but since I did, I guess I gotta live with it. After this lesson, I am never coming back again. That is my best story ever!

-Dischick, San Francisco

From The Beat: Without needing to go into the details of how you "messed up," we wish you had given a few more specifics about what you're going to change when you get out to keep the promise that you're never coming back. It's obvious that you have the intellectual skills you need to succeed, but only you know if you have the strength of character to honor your determination that this is your last trip into slavery. Get your diploma and go to college. You could be anything you choose to be.

Where Am I?

Since as long as I can remember

My mom ain't never been there

She broke my pockets

And took everything I ever had

But despite all this

I love her to death

After all this

I thought she'd even take my last breath

Still, to this day, I'm still standing tall

About to walk the stage like it ain't nothing at all

Tomorrow's my birthday

Which means I become a man

I'm turnin' eighteen

To the law and government

I'm still a kid

In my eyes I'm already 21

'Cause of the things I been through

In my head

I feel I've seen too many things to be in juvy

I should really be in the county jail

That's why I'm glad I'm still young

An' I should stay in a child's place

But my mind is tellin' me it can't be done

I'm lost in my own tragedy

-Chris, Marin

From The Beat: Beautiful, sad, even tragic poem. Is your mom still in your life on the outs? How is she dealing with you being in juvy? You may need the comfort and protection a child has to have, and it's good that you realize it. Do you have any adults in your life you can go to for understanding, fun, advice, someone you can talk to? If not, can you tell you tell a counselor or mental health in? If you have someone you trust to confide in, maybe you can work with what's messing with you, so you'll never have to go to country jail. Please get whatever help you need now!

Cocaine: RIP Tiger

Cocaine is the drug of heavenly powers

A white chemical that should be snorted

It is so strong it can't be aborted

Once used there is no stop

It makes you so stupid you can't see the cop

He pulled out his gun and told you not to move

But you did not stop so now you lose

It was your life, the one you choose

I remember you were young and lazy

You were on the news they said you were crazy

I went to the cemetery where your body lie

I didn't even get a chance to say good-bye

I knew you were a good guy one that was kind and shy

-Peanut, San Francisco

From The Beat: Thank you for this poetic reminder that some things that feel good today can mean there will be no tomorrow. The problem with drugs is that they can quickly addict you, make you their prisoners, so that you think you're in control of your life, but you're really just a slave. And that kind of slavery can lead to other, more direct kinds of slavery where strangers order your every move. We hope some readers with habits will absorb the wisdom of what you've written, and make some changes in their lives while they still can.

Best Story Ever

I'm going to tell you my best story ever. First off, the only best story I think that I can have is freedom. Freedom is the only thing that matters to me while I'm in here.

The path I chose ain't the best one, but if I make the right choices, I can make something of myself.

When people make the wrong choices, the only thing that happens is that you end up in here. So if you're readin', don't make the same mistake twice. What I'm tryin' to say is my best story is getting out of here.

-Korff, San Francisco

From The Beat: If every story has a beginning, middle and end, then getting out of here is only the beginning of your best story. How do you imagine the middle... the part that comes after you walk out, and the part that will determine what the ending will be.

One Positive School Experience

Before I started the lifestyle I am living now, I was actually a very good student. It might not seem like it now, considering I've only attended probably a week of high school altogether, and I'm now 18 and a senior.

Before I took the wrong road, I loved school. As a child, I worked hard, got good grades, and attended everyday. From about 2nd grade to 7th, I was on Honor Roll and I was a GATE student. I would be so proud walking up to that stage in front of the school and my grandparents, receiving that award.

It was a really good feeling making my grandparents proud of me and seeing my award on the fridge.

I wish I could have stayed on that path.

Life now would be so different. But like a lot of others, I chose drugs and crime over school, which was one of my biggest mistakes.

But that's one of my proudest moments in life, and one of my positive school experiences. Late Beat.

-Genevieve, Santa Clara

From The Beat: OK, so you messed up, but you're still breathing. You're one of the lucky ones. So get with it. If you need help, if you have addiction problems to deal with, ask for help. Remember your capabilities. Accept responsibility. Don't beat yourself up. Get on with things. Get back to school. You have some catching up to do. On with it.

Happy Birthday, Mom

I love you, Mom, and I'm sorry I had to be in here fo' yo' birthday. I wish I was with you fo' yo' birthday.

When I get out, I'ma do good fo' you. I knew I should've done better when I was on the outs, but it was hard. But since I came in here and seen you came visit me with tears in yo' eyes, it hurt me, and I'm sorry.

I love you, Mom. Happy 40th birthday.

-Chris, San Francisco

From The Beat: You know, Chris, if you keep the promise you make in this birthday tribute to "do good" when you get out, that will be the best birthday present you could possibly give to your mother... and to yourself!

No To Coke

I got people all around me asking me if I wanna do some coke. But in be like, what should I do? I stopped doing it, and everywhere I go there's coke and people asking me if I want some. But I be like, "No," because I ain't tryna do that no more.

-Cholo, San Francisco

From The Beat: This piece is too short, and you could have added a lot more about your experiences and why you have quit. But the message you are giving is so important — and we're so proud of you for having the courage to say no — that we had to give you a co-pow. Don't fall for those who will always try to tempt you to go back to a lifestyle that leads nowhere good. Built on the foundation of sobriety you've got going. Good for you!

The Duck Looking Girl

Sitting here at this table these three girls — one with blonde and black hair, one with bangs and the black girl with a pony tail. The girl with the ponytail told me that I looked like a duck. As I sit here and talk to them, I learned more about them. They really cool people to talk to. So no matter how people look, you should know them first before you judge them.

-Jerrell, San Francisco

From The Beat: Prejudice means to judge things before you know them, and that's what we do when we judge people by the surface. As for looking like a "duck," we can't agree with that. But even if it's accurate, do you know the story of the "Ugly Duckling"? If not, you should try to find it in the library or on the Internet and read it. We think you'll like it.

I Want My Freedom

Being locked up is not the way to go
 I'm surrounded by dumb kids that

Don't go to school no mo',

Why do people always shoot up the corner store,

Why can't we go back to old school Nintendo 64?

The whole situation I'm enduring is fo' sho' pissin' me off though.

I don't like it the dope game I quit that

If not I'll probably be right back in jail,

Thinking in my mind that I failed,

Dreaming that I can sail away from the world.

My money is as sweet as honey,

I want my freedom, screw stardom.

I like to fly I also like to get high sip syrup, drink patron

While I'm smoking purple at home

And talking to a bob on the phone.

Now I feel like I'm grown

but it's kinda messed up that I'm going to be gone

-- for a very long time.

-Ice Mayne, Alameda

From The Beat: It is messed up. But at the same time, they can't take your mental freedom right? And you keep that, so long as you keep reading, keep writing, keep pushing yourself to stay up and above the negativity around you, whether its behind the walls or out on the streets!

To My Mom

Dear Momma,

It's your son Momo

Sayin' how much I miss you

And I love the way you were there in my thoughts.

Even though you weren't alive past 29

And couldn't see me grow up.

I know you didn't really know me,

But you were the one I knew.

So can't say I hate you.. so moms I love you.

RIP Luanna Jane Taylor

-Lil' Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: We turned this piece into a poem, we hope you don't mind: It's just that it had so much emotion in it, it felt like a poem when we read it. It made us wish we knew more about your mother too, and about what kind of a person she was. What have you heard about her from your other family members?

Wanting To Fit In

What's up Beat? This is the first story that I have wrote, dude, to the time that I've been here at YGC. The topic I have chosen is simply saying no.

It's been a lot of events in my life so far that I should have just said no. My first time smoking weed is the perfect example.

One day it was a block party in my 'hood. I'm outside with all the people my age. My friend started rolling up some weed. They told me I should try it. I didn't want to look like a punk, so hit it a couple of times. Then got caught by moms hella high.

I learned that to think before I do and to also just say no.

-Israel, San Francisco

From The Beat: Unfortunately, the way you started smoking is the way too many young people start doing things that aren't good for them. Being afraid to "look like a punk" is something all of us have felt at a certain age. So sometimes, it takes a lot more courage to be the only one to turn down those offers, whether it's weed, drink or pulling a lick. If you've really learned the lesson you say you have, then maybe it was worth it. Thank you for writing in The Beat. We look forward to more of your thinking and writing.

Somethin' I Didn't Even Do

Well, the reason why I'm here in this dump is because I messed up by hanging out with the wrong people. I think that I'm here on some straight BS. I'm doing all this for some shhh I didn't even do and the thing about it is the person who actually did the crime didn't go to the hall at all!

This really makes me angry because I am being charged for robbery when I didn't rob anyone, and I'm doing time for someone who's on the outs.

Now I can understand that I can run from the police and I had involvement in the crime (on a very low level if you ask me) but the thing about it is that the court system really don't care.

Honestly I am not the type of person who would ever even think about robbing someone because it's just not something I would do. But just because I chose to hang out with my friends on this day I now suffer the consequences of a bad choice.

-Young E

From The Beat: It sounds like your so-called friends don't know how to be positive with their time. You can't change the past, but you can change the future, right? So what's the next move? Maybe it's time to find new friends, because like you say you're not the type of person who would be doing wrong.

I Told Him Not To Go

When I was about 12 years old, I went to my patna's house and he was about to leave with some people. I told him not to go and he ended up dead. I was grieving for like two months.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We wish he'd listened to you - if he had, he might still be alive. Have you ever been on the opposite side, when you were about to head into danger, and someone told you to stay home, but you weren't trying to hear them?

Best Friends

Do you got a best friend? Well I do, her name is Tayana J. We know each other from school. her and I have a song for you that's if you're reading this? "If I was your best friend I'll want you around all the time. Can I be your best friend girl if you promise you'll be mine."

-Lil' Charles

From The Beat: That's great that you have a best friend! Do y'all support each other and try to stay outta of trouble?

Anger

This is Marcus live from the Hall and I am very angry right now. I'm still trying to get over the fact that I lost my mom and they move me from my unit. It just don't make no sense that I'm in a max unit, and I ran from camp. They say I got to be in here till my next court date, which June 16.

But the good news is that when I go over to the court I'm going to be able to go home. Plus I'm going to miss my birthday again, just like last year on April 16. With all that stuff on my mind, its hard for me to be happy in here. I'm going to get through it though, just spend most of my time in my room sleeping, 'cause when I get back to the house I know I'm not going to get that much sleep. Well this is some of the stuff that gets me angry. I'm out peace!

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: Why won't you get much sleep? We only ask you this because we REALLY hope you are planning on taking it easy when you get out. You've been through so much already! Getting caught up is the last thing you need.

Who Are We To Blame

We stuck in the game
Just tryin' to make a name
Drug dealing 'cause we gotta maintain
Doing all this 'cause we feel like we in pain
But there's one question
Who are we to blame

-Johnny

From The Beat: It's a good question. What do you think? Is there someone to blame? Does having someone to blame help? Is blaming even the answer?

The Best Day Ever: Tomorrow!

I think that I might get out tomorrow, I really want to. I think that if I do get out that will be the best day ever that has happened to me this year. I been doing good too. I have been handling my business too. I've been in the hall for too long, and I've spent my birthday here. I don't wanna be here on another special day and I'm going to be driving when I get out to so I really can't wait.

What will top it all off is I'm gone see family. that I miss very much. I just wanna leave out of court with my family tomorrow on our way home for good. I'm just go keep praying and I'm gone hope that tomorrow is my final day in jail. Well alright, wish me luck.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Good luck! And more importantly, we hope you never get out: Like you say, there's no reason to miss another special day.

Judge Trying Give Me A Hundred Years P.O.W.

What's good with The Beat man?
Judge trying to give me a hundred years
Keep on going back and forth to count
Mama want me to live a long time
She don't want me to go to but I chose the wrong things
And made some mistakes that I wish I never did
Smoke some weed now bra a new kid
Went to court I cant get a chance
Trying to change my life and be a new man people say I
can't
Bra I think I can
Screw it bee that's what I am
Imagine being in a bathroom sleeping every night
I bet judge don't know
But if he did he'd still try to give a ninja a hundred
years.

-Lil' Co

From The Beat: You can't place the fate of your life on the judge anymore. You did what you did. You can't turn back the hands of time. All you can do is learn from your mistakes instead of keep committing the same ones over and over. If you wanna change your life it starts with the decisions you make now.

Trapped In A War Zone

Every which way I look they trying to put bullets in my
dome
I see to many lost souls roaming around the hood
Cause everybody I know is off that good
What the hood has to offer
Gun's drugs and warfare
When is the violence gon' stop
When hollow tip bullets gone hit that's when is another
body drop.

-Jamon

From The Beat: Trapped in war zone you need to get up outta of there. Unless you wanna be a victim or a just another body on that cold hearted battle field.

Like, Wow

It was a nice day upon us on a Sunday morning. It was about 11:23am when me and my cousins was heading out to go see they sick father at the hospital. We was approximately five minutes away from leaving out the door

When my Auntie Nicole was fishing for her keys to the car, a call came in on the house phone and asked to speak with Nicole. When she took the phone I heard her respond speaking to whoever asked her was it her. After at east the thirty seconds on the phone she took to her room and yelled after she close the door.

Automatically we assumed something was wrong so we all headed into her room. She asked my cousins to stay clam before she announced that the' father died. After that the whole room went into silence for a moment, until my uncle's youngest daughter broke out in tears and was saying "No, no, not my daddy," repeatedly, and then everybody broke out crying.

Even I did, because Uncle Carl used to treat me like one his own children. He use to let me come over whenever I wanted to and let me work for him for money since he owned two security jobs.

But I just couldn't get over that he died right before we was leaving out the door to visit him. I spent a couple days in my room crying...I couldn't even try to get over it to release the pain.

Honestly I went to the street to buy bags of weed and blow them with one of my loyal friend, named David that is like a brother to me to help ease the pain. It worked for a while... but still ain't completely got over it.

-Kevin

From The Beat: You painted such a vivid picture of that horrible day that we felt like we were right there with you. We can see how you'd be tempted to cover the pain up with smoke, but pain like that never actually "goes away" does it. What would your Uncle Carl be wanting you to do? How can you honor his memory?

The Hood

I come from the streets of Oakland. The hood is like a home to me. On these streets I get into trouble. I'm always in juvenile hall and I hate it. The hood is so bad but at the same time it's good. I love the hood but bullets be flying like birds out there and its hard to stay alive.

Ninjas out here selling dope to people tryin' to make the fast money. Some just try to get something on 24's just so they can stunt cause stunting is a habit. The streets is my home so all you fake ninjas need to leave it alone.

-Baby Woody

From The Beat: You gotta hate it or love it. We aint trying to knock your hood or anything but why do people risk their lives and freedom just for something on 24's. Is the chrome on those wheels more precious than your freedom or life itself?

Grief

I lost my grandma and I couldn't handle the pain.
It seemed like I had a lot to lose and nothing to gain.
Because the decisions I made could have had put me in a grave.

But I'm stuck in this place and nowhere to go
Damn I wish I could die and have God take away my soul.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: It's heartbreaking to read the sadness in this poem, especially because your grandma would never have wanted you to feel this pain. She would want you to make different decisions from now on, though, because of her love for you. Does the memory of that love give you strength?

Still Here

G-vo Beat? This Chikillo, well I'm still here. Waiting until they come pick me but I'm happy 'cause today April 1, 2008 I make two years with my girl friend. And that makes me hella happy.

But the bad thing is that I'm in the hall, but it's good I'm just ready to get out and start my life again and kick it with my homies. Well Beat this vato is out.

- Chikillo

From The Beat: You're always talking about how you can't wait to kick it with your homies. That's only gonna bring you right back to the halls. You never talk about how you wanna change your habits like getting in trouble, or your kid, and you never talk about your girl. If you wanna start a new life then you're gonna have to stop getting in trouble. You can't expect to chill with the homies and not get into some trouble.

Grief

When I grieve, it's not a great thing because I've lost a lot of the people I love. It's like losing your whole life. I think about all the people I lost, and that I'll never completely heal because those people were part of my family. I can never see them again and it's sad. It's life 'cause everybody got to go someday.

But sometime it be the wrong people that be taken away from us. But God has a better place for my family and I pray every night for my family because I love them with all my heart and soul. I'm losing my family to stupid stuff and that's not worth it. I hope my whole family turns their life around.

-Lil' Ree

From The Beat: We are sorry for your loss, but this is what will happen when being stuck into a type of lifestyle that's tied to the streets. Why don't you set the example first? If they see a member who is playing the same game, getting out of the gang life, accomplishing many positive goals for a good future, they can learn from you and follow your foot steps? At least you can save one or more of those lives that are being misguided by negative influence. It's sounds hard, but you won't loose anything by trying. Remember, in order to help them, you need to help yourself out first. Then others.

I'm Mad

I am mad that I'm in here. I'm mad because I didn't think I would get caught doing what I did, because I had already did the same thing two times before and got away with it. But the third time it wasn't working.

Another reason why I'm mad is because I walked right into going to jail. I went to court two times already and got detained. I have two more weeks until I go to court. That's why I'm mad.

-Donald

From The Beat: You can't get away with it every time. Sooner or later you're bound to get caught. We hope you don't be thinking that you can get away with it every time cause you can't. You should be mad because you're doing what you're doing. You need stop before you keep coming in and out of jail for the rest of your life.

Dear Mom

Dear mom I'm sorry for all the pain I put you through
Now I'm locked up and all it's doing is stressing you
Not just me but my brother too
We thought we was coo'
Robbing houses skipping schoo'
Doing shhh we shouldn't do
And in the end it only hurt you
How we sitting in our cells crying because we miss you
Mom I wrote you poem to tell you that I love you...

-Johnny

From The Beat: Make sure you send a copy of this beautiful poem to your mom, but also, is saying sorry enough? Or is it time for you AND your brother to switch up your game?

Being Patient

What's up with it Beat? Shhh I'm still in this thang waiting for my group home to come get me. I was supposed to be gone two weeks ago to my group home but I don't know why they taking hella long to come get me. I've been in here fo' too long.

I'm ready to get released this week to my group home at San Jose. Shhh I don't know why I'm still here, I'm been doing really good in here. I could see if I'm doing bad in here for them to keep me in here, but I've been good.

-Young A

From The Beat: Well all you can do is stay patient. Stay doing your program, stay positive and good things will come. Keep ya' head up.

Driving My Moma Crazy

My mama tells me when I run the streets, she can't sleep. Her phone rings late at night and she thinks something happen to me. She turns her head every time police come. She scared to look 'cause it might be me in the back seat. Her blood pressure go straight through the roof all because the only time she have peace is when I'm in the house asleep.

Man, I think I'm speaking for every street nigga around the world 'cause we don't never have enough time to think about what we're taking, or puttin' mama through. And for all that's said, just pray to God she doesn't wipe her hands off me.

Her favorite word is dope. Ain't the only way to eat. She heard the feds in the town and her knees got weak.

-Lil' Domo

From The Beat: Have you had the time to think the pain you have been giving to the person who loves you the most? You are being selfish with her and yourself. She doesn't deserve the type of preoccupations you've been given her. If she has a drug problem, the least you can do is to help her get her feet back where they should belong. She's your mother not a stranger. She carried you for months just for you to be here. Is this the way you are going to pay her back? Do something!

Blinded By "Love"

This Weezy, I'ma tell ya a story about two females I fell in love with. Check it out, one day, I was at the Mosque (a place where Muslims worship God), and I seen this fine Afghan female. I knew I had to talk to her, so I started talking to her, but not in a flirty way, because it was at the mosque.

I didn't know if she was that type of girl. I started talkin' to her, then one day she asked me for my phone and she called her friend blocked, and gave me the phone and told me to holla at her.

So, I started talking to her and stuff, but I didn't really want to get with her friend, I wanted to get with her! I told her that and she said, "you know I'm not like that."

I guess she was just too religious. She told her friend that I was her cousin, and that I wanted to get with her. She got me and her friend talking to each other, so I was like, ok, it's coo'. I'll just use her friend to get to her. Me and her friend started going out, and after about a month or two she started feelin' me and wanted to get with me, but it was too late, I started having feelings for her friend.

Then after 9 months I cheated on her friend with her and I told her, and we broke up, and then I broke up with her friend too.

-Weezy

From The Beat: What a shame! This is what to expect when we do not do things right. Next time, try to be faithful and think about your partner's feeling before doing something like that. What did you learn from this? For one, cheating don't pay!

She's Exactly What I Need

She's my sunshine in the rain
My Tylenol when I'm in pain
Like tall glass of lemonade
That's burnin' hot on summer days
She's exactly what I need
She soothes like the ocean rushing on the sand
She takes care of me
She's exactly what I need
She's so beautiful
Sometimes I start to close my eyes
She's exactly what I need

-M

From the Beat: Then, what the heck are you doing here? Go get her and be with her. You're wasting time! Yet, now you have a ton of work to do to stay out of such a place. Handle your business!!

I Wanna Be Free

Man, I wanna get out. Being in Juvenile Hall is crazy. I hate being in these small rooms. I hate being locked up. This shhh is torture. They only let you out sometimes. The food is the nastiest shhh in the world. They only let you take a shower for 5 minutes.

When I'm at home, I take one hour showers. I feel so sick. When I first got locked up I was dizzy and was throwing up in my room. I didn't know how much I cared about my family until I got in this place.

-Boobie

From The Beat: What next? Would you be back after experiencing such as nasty and horrible experience? It's better to be home. Get out and stay out. What's your lesson from this?

Hoping I Get Out

What's up Beat? Man, this shhh is boring, but I'm gonna be in the outs mane. I can't wait to get out maybe I'm gonna be out tomorrow but I'm happy cause mane I'm gonna be out wit my ninja in the hood.

Then I'm gonna be wit my family in the house. My lil' brother and my homies. Well first I got to make some thing up with my family especially my mom. I got to tell her I'm sorry cause I told her that I hate her and when she'd die I wont be there and I will make a party. But when I'm on the outs I'm gonna tell her I'm sorry.

-Paul

From The Beat: Man, homie you shouldn't be saying those kind of things to your mom. She gave you birth and you owe her more than that. If she tells you stuff it's cause she don't want you to go down the wrong path and end up in jail or in a coffin!

Saying No (Nah)

I remember one time I was messing with this boy and we were getting high, drinking and the whole nine... and dude was hella cute, but when I get high I be like backup!

So we go to his house or whatever, and I guess he thought I was about to give him some sex and it was funny because I knew that's what he wanted, and I knew he wasn't getting any.

So when he tried to make his move I was like "nah, I'm good."

He was like, "all right. I'm about to take you home."

I was like, "fast" 'cause I was high, and it was about the time my boyfriend was going to be on his way to my house anyway...

-Taco

From the Beat: What about saying no to drugs and alcohol? Are you ever able to do that?

Stupid Mistake!

I'm looking stupid because I'm in here for shooting a school window with a bb gun. I've been in here for six days and I'm already ready to leave.

When you're in here you're thinking a lot. Mostly about when you're getting out or why you're in here and why was I acting stupid.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That's cool that you recognized that you've made a mistake. Learn from it. There's nothing you can do now, but learn from it and don't make it again. 'Cause next time you're gonna be sitting in there for an even longer period of time. Part of maturing is recognizing when you're acting stupid, or recognizing your mistakes and correcting them. You have a good head on your shoulders don't lose it.

Colors Everywhere

Use to see in black and white

Never any in between

Waitin' on the love of my life

To come in to my dream

Everything is shades of Gray

Never any greens

All the beauty that was waitin' for me'

Lou, you put the color back in the sky'

You put the rainbow in my eyes

A silver lining in my prayers

And now there are colors everywhere

My life is so predictable

Never any mystery

But now I have a hand to hold

All of that is history

Needing someone else to turn to

Someone who can help me learn and see

All the beauty that was waitin' for me

You, you put the color back in the sky

You put the rainbow in my eyes

A silver lining in my prayers

And now there are colors everywhere.

-M

From The Beat: Who is this girl who brought all the colors back to your view? It's a shame you got it all outside with this girl, but you can't enjoy it. Are you working hard in getting back your freedom to be with this girl? The way you described her, make us think that she's one of the best. Don't loose her, because girls like that one aren't found very easily.

Grief

I have grief over being in juvenile hall again because of a stupid mistake I made. I'm gonna learn from this mistake and never come back here again because this isn't where I belong.

I belong riding my bike with my friends having fun like a normal kid. This is a place for criminals and I'm not a criminal and a lot of these other kids aren't either they just made a mistake.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You're right y'all ain't criminals. You just made a mistake. That's great that your recognized it all on your own. Learn from it. Stick with this mentality and you'll be good.

I Miss My Freedom

I miss my mom and my dad. I should never even did what I did to get in here. When I go home I am never coming back I don't like the food here. I miss my mom cooking. I'm mad.

-Antese

From The Beat: We all don't appreciate the small things like our mom's cooking when we're on the outs. But we're glad to hear you say you ain't never coming back we hope that's a promise and not just jail talk.

Saying No

I feel grief about the situation I am going through right now.

Now that I'm in juvenile hall doing my time I think to myself "one day I will be out of this place so just live the way I have to live right now and I will be out soon."

There is no reason for me to cry and regret the things I did to end up in this place because it happened already. I just need to know the next time I'm out don't make another wrong choice or mistake to end up here again.

-Christine

From The Beat: That's good advice to give yourself, Christine. If you stick to that, you will be okay.

Talking To My Brother

Well today I was talking to my brother on the phone. It was the first time I didn't cry while on the phone with him in here. Talking to him makes my day even if it makes me cry. Today when I was talking to my brother he told me my grandma is finally going to let me come home.

I'm so happy 'cause I have court on my 17th birthday. So I get to go home on my birthday. I'm so excited I can't wait till my birthday. I only have two more weeks in here.

-Amber

From The Beat: That's great news Amber. Tell us more about your brother- have you always been close? Who's older? What's his personality like? What do you plan to do together when you get out?

The Hall

The hall is the worst place to be at. I rather be anywhere in the Bay than to be up in here. You lose control over your life. The staff can be cool when they want to be or they can be punks, most of the time they are punks. We always gotta be quiet, they raid your room almost everyday, throw your stuff around in your room, then make you clean it up. You gotta eat this nasty food that comes from Santa Rita, and you gotta be in your room for most of the day.

I know jail is not supposed to be fun but damn, jail is hella weak. I try to stay out, but in the streets you gotta do what you gotta do, everybody know that.

But if you are one of those cats that have parents able to give you everything you need, don't try to live the street life 'cause the consequences ain't cool. Be safe if you out there in the streets, you know.

-Young Foul

From The Beat: That, "you gotta do what you gotta do," is what brings you back here? What do you have to do? Is there someone holding and pointing a gun at you be on the streets doing the things you gotta do? Be realistic! What's the point? What are you trying to prove? Good advice! We hope they fallow it through! But, you don't need the support of parents to succeed in life. We have known guys who have made it with a father, a mother or both. You can be another one on the list. Trust us, we are not laying!

Yo' Beat!

What's up Beat? Well I'm still here waiting to get out.

Well today I got some good news that I'm going to a group home in the bay because last time she send me to Chino Hills. So I'm happy 'cause I'm going to a group home in the bay, so yeah. I'm not coming back here if they send me to the bay and I'm not coming back here.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Congratulations and not getting sent hella far. But if you go to the group home out here in the bay you better finish it so you can get out this system and move on with your life.

All On Me

Everything is on me. I'm the one who determines if I'm come back to jail or if I'm stay in the streets. I'm the one who determines if I move on or if I wallow in grief. I'm the one who determines if I'm let my peers or the streets influence me.

It's a time when everyone has to make up and take responsibility. This is where it comes down on you and on me, and since I call myself a "G" it's only right that I "man up" for mistakes made in my history.

I don't know about you, but I know from this day forward I'm not going to try to be nothing other than me, and the best I can be. Now that's what you call a real man, and a real "G."

-Lil' William

From The Beat: Show it with actions not just words! What are your plans? Are you going back to school? What makes a man? And what makes a G? It's time for you to become a man, a responsible man who can start acting like one. Your childish games are over. And it's time for you to start focusing in your future.

The Best Story

The best story I have is when I turned myself in because I was pregnant then got off. Then I got myself in school and got a job. But.... I'm back.

-Ladi Lee

From the Beat: So the story has had some major ups and downs so far. Luckily though, it's only just begun.

Another Chance

Man, what's good with it Beat? Me? Same old stuff. Coming back and forth to this joint.

Well anyways, this Bra Bra, I'm about be getting a released this week to go to LA. My PO is giving me a chance to do right. I'm going to L.A. for two months and will leave on good behavior, and come back to the town for a month so. I'm juiced. I really think I can do this.

I've been writing in this Beat Within for a minute and I'm tired of writing in here. I know I've been writing in this Beat saying that I'm not going to come back, but I'm really not about to come back. This is my chance to change. I know I've had hella chances and messed up but I'm about to take advantage of this chance and run with it.

-Bra Bra

From The Beat: Bra Bra, we wish you all the best, and we hope you stay free and proud. You are a great writer with a lot of heart and brains, and we know you will better on the outside with these skills in hand.

Running Away

Hey, what's good Beat? This is the homie Yoyo coming from the inside of these struggling wall in unit 9. I don't know what to write about. Well, I cut from this group home like almost 500 miles away and made it home. I left my clothes in the back of a house by the group home. I had hella new clothes and all my clothes from the hut was in that shhh too.

I guess I lost all was 5 or 6 bills worth and all I got is some boots, and clothes. When I get out or sent to a placement, I'm 'bout to be looking grimey 'till I get my grind on.

So 'till next week Beat. Please pray for me

-Yoyo

From The Beat: Honestly, if you keep thinking like this, you won't have a future. The way you are running your life will only bring you back to this place or another place worst. Getting your grind on is what will make this happen. Use this time to reflect on the things you are saying. One last question: Was it worth it?

The Person Who Changed My Life

The person that changed my life I would have to say, is my boyfriend B. You're probably wondering why I would say he changed my life out of all people, but he helped me realize that I didn't have to wear makeup or wear sexy clothes just to keep him because he likes me for me.

-Camile

From The Beat: What do you like about him? And what do you like about yourself? You've started writing an interesting piece, and we want to hear more!

Disappointed

I'm disappointed because they taking to long to send me up to camp. Then they transferred me from my regular unit 3 to unit 12. I've been here for about two weeks.

I wish I wouldn't have shot that girl with that BB gun. Then I wouldn't be in this situation after all. I never got the chance to tell her I was sorry but it wasn't intentional.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We can understand your frustration because you wanna go to camp and get your time over with. But don't stress over things you have no control of. You'll get there soon. Once you get there knock it out so you can get out of here and move on with your life.

Grief

My grief is mental and physical. I have a lot of grief right now because I'm being taken away from the people I love the most.

The way I handle my pain is actually very easy. If you believe and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He put everything into his hands, and it all works out.

- B

From the Beat: It's wonderful you have faith. But what about the power you have to make change? What can you DO to make your own situation better?

Life Is A Hell

Life could be a hell in so many ways. First of all, by my girl. She went bad on me by going clubbing and stuff. I did not like it so I had to cut her lose by not paying her no attention to make her mad.

Second, life is a hell when my cousin Tony passed away. In loving memory of Tony aka Lilo. When he went down, my life went round. It's like he had passed everything he had to me by passing over all. The respect that he had, passed over. So that way life is a hell. So keep your head up!

-Sergio

From The Beat: Sorry for your loss! Life isn't always how we plan for it to be and no one knows exactly what tomorrow brings. That's why you must always stay improving in life to make life the best it can be, and not some much of the other word you portray it to be. How are you planning to live yours? The same?

My Sweet Love

My sweet love is someone that I really love because he made a lot of things change for me. He also took me in when no one else did. The love that he has for me I never had from a man. His love is sweet. Age is a difference but it wasn't my eyes, it wasn't my body, it was my love and my speech that attracted him.

-Iesha

From Beat: We are glad to hear he's made you feel loved. But what has he really changed for you? Lets remember, you are writing this from jail. Tell us more about him, and how your relationship connects to this stint you are doing in jail.

RIP Derial

It was April 18, 2007, a day that I will never forget. I was at home and I got a phone call from my sister saying that our patna just told her that my boyfriend Derial was killed early that morning.

I couldn't believe what I heard. I immediately called one of his close friends to see if what I've just heard was true. He told me. Dang. Ever since then my life has become a blur. Me and his mommy grieve for him everyday.

I can't believe how detailed his mommy described it to me! My life will never be the same. I'm gonna mourn Derial 'till I join him.

-Sad friend

From the Beat: We are always so saddened to hear about the needless deaths of young men in our community. What do you think we need to do to keep the peace? What can you as an individual do?

Horrific Street Truth

In the street life
Anything goes
From pimps & hoes
To murder cases never closed.
It's a hard life, with a horrific truth
Many can't face, what really takes place
They try to cover it up
But how does it help?
Police walk around, with a 9 in their belt.
Can't handle the cards we were dealt.
So we try to hide & we get criticized
But no one knows what we feel inside.

-Moriah

From The Beat: People NEED to know, need to hear. That's why your work as a poet is so important: Speaking your mind, putting your words in verse, that's one way to stop hiding. And maybe if enough people speak, the world will listen up.

Tough Talk

I'm like a shark in the sea
I'm a gangsta from the streets
Ninja don't you see
That's why I keep telling this ninja
It's hard being a G
They got me in this cage
Full of anger and pain
But I gotta hold it down
Purple in my veins
Ninjas acting the fool
Thinking this shhh is cool
Trying to play wit' the game
They gone end up in a T-shirt
Or a picture frame.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: Why is it common for many to prove to the world that they're hard and ignorant? Why can't people fight with their minds, ideas and thought instead of always with a weapon which doesn't get one far in life? When will people see the light?

Hard Time Saying No

Saying no is something teenagers have a hard time saying. Peer pressure is common and it's hard to choose to say no! I have had so many times where I had to think through something in order to say no, when no should have been my answer off tops. Like when it comes to sex!

-Jasmine

From the Beat: What are the challenges to saying no? And what has helped you to say no in the past?

I'm Back

What's up Beat, this your boy Marcos. Yep I'm back here in the hall. I ran from camp once again. I thought I was going to pimp it but I didn't. My stupid self got caught up in the west. But its cool though. Well I probably won't be here long. aright then.

-Marcos

From The Beat: Why do we put our lives in the hands of strangers for them to do with us as we please? Why do we get out and forget the pain of the inside?

Five Months Together

At night I think of him, the one I gave my heart to.
I try not to cry. I lay in my bed and face the wall and pray.
Pray that when I get out I will see him and he will be ok.
I cry because I remember all of the good times that we had.
I think about when he holds me and I get all warm inside.
I think about how he always kisses me
on my forehead and calls me his princess.
I admire his beautiful smile and his cute dimples!
I love those dimples, they remind me of diamonds.
I think of his swagga look,
the way he wore his dreads under his hat and black hoodie
with his jungle jeans and his fresh black Air Force Ones.
And I remember always feeling comfortable standing by him 'cause he's 5'2 just like me.
I miss my boyfriend, my right hand, and best friend!
On the 5th of May we will be together for five months!
The longest relationship we both ever had.
I can't wait to get out and see my love!
Can't wait to be his again.

-Sol

From the Beat: When you think of the two of you together in the future, what do you think about? When you think of your own future, what do you think about?

A Month After

My grandfather died about a month after I got locked up. I felt so bad because I couldn't even go to his funeral.
I wasn't able to see him and tell him I love him before he died. After he died, I felt like there was a big hole in my chest, like I felt empty and depressed.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We're sorry for such a sad experience. We are sure that even though you didn't get the chance to express your last words to him, he knew about your feelings towards him. Would thing had been different, if he had asked you to make him happy by asking you to change? When something is apart of your garden it's never the same when it is removed. The constant challenge in life is adjusting to change.

Stay Fitted

What It Do Beat. It's yo' girl Quilla, writing once again. Man I'm tired of sittin' in this messed up place. I need to go home on da real. People on da outs always hatin' on me cause I'm hella fly. I stay fitted. I stay with my hair done and I ain't bald headed.

-Marquilla

From The Beat: What we wonder is - if you're so confident in yourself, why do you even waste your energy writing about other people who 'hate' on you? We'd much rather here about YOU - your plans for the future, your dreams, your life. Peace.

My birthday

For my birthday I was supposed to have a party at the center in the Park, but later on that day I found out my mom had cancelled my party. I did not know why she canceled so I got mad and flashed, and I hit her in the head with a mirror.

I did not know that my mom bought me an outfit, set me up a hair appointment, and got me backstage passes to the Chris Brown concert. When I found out what she did I apologized and felt so bad about what I did. I cried and I couldn't even enjoy my birthday.

-Lady New

From the Beat: That's a sad story. Do you often flash like that? What are some healthier ways you can deal with disappointment and anger in the future? If you could have taken a deep breath instead, it would have been a totally different night...

My Release

I went to court on Tuesday of last week, so exactly a week ago. I got an E.M. release. I found out today that I've had my release. They just haven't gotten in touch with my PO. That's scandalous! I should been out. She just doesn't want me to go home. It's her fault I'm still in here!!!

-Frustrated

From the Beat: That's terrible that you had to spend more time in jail than you were supposed to. But don't blame it all on your P.O. If you are going to make sure that you don't come back, you have to take responsibility for your actions too.

What's Up Beat

This Juvenile Hall is getting old. I've been coming here for five years straight, back and forth.

For years I haven't been home. I've either been on the run --meaning in the street -- or here in Juvenile Hall. I've been in the game for seven about to be 8 years. I've been told to walk away from the street life but they don't understand I'm in a position where I'm too deep in the game... its easier said than done.

But I'll still be a man and take care of my responsibilities, as a brother, a son and an adult. Even though I'm still gang-banging I'll take care of my family like a man supposed to ...but I'll also do my part in the street cause it's in my blood. The streets raised me since 10 years old and since then my life changed in a big way.

The streets never turned their back on me so I'll never turn my back on the streets.

-Smokey

From The Beat: The streets never turned your back on you, but that's cause they're hungry. They feed off the blood of young men like you - who are brave, loyal, hurt, and angry. Who signed on the dotted line when they were too young to know what they were signing. We understand that it's really hard to get out, so we're not going to try and push you to do that. But we will say this: The streets don't love you.

An Escape

This once time I saw a dog. The dog was big with a spiky collar.

The yard he was in had a small gate and it looked like he could get high enough to jump to hop the fence. I guessed right because he jumped over the fence and started running real fast. I looked real hard for a second and I noticed he was running towards me so I ran away real fast back up the street.

-Ramon

From The Beat: It's a good thing your instincts had you paying attention, otherwise you might have ended up with that dog's teeth sunk in you. Have there been other times where being extra-aware have saved you from trouble?

Grief

I have a male friend that's older than me. I've been hanging out with him for a while. He taught me a lot in life. He's been in and out of jail and he told me that I don't have to cry or anything when I'm in jail or feel sorry for myself 'cause there will be a day that I will be out. I look up to him and I call him my O.G. because he talks to me and teaches me about staying away from drugs and troubles. If I wanna do drugs, he says just smoke weed because it will keep you happy and keep your mind off stress but be sure you have a good life. Have a family a job and everything.

-Christine

From The Beat: This OG sounds like he wants your best interest. How did you meet him? What else has he taught you? Do you think you'll give youngsters similar advice in the future?

The streets raised me since 10 years old and since then my life changed in a big way.

A Dollar And A Dream!

My momma always told me that a dollar can make a dream come true.

I asked her how can a dollar make anyone's dream come true? She told me that a dollar is just like a life. That you take chances being something that you're not and it's gone in a blink of an eye.

-Lil' Shadow

From The Beat: Your mother sounds like a wise woman - did she have other sayings that you think about a lot?

RIP Burger: Pain to My Heart

Well I lost someone I loved. His name was Anthony aka Burger. I couldn't believe what I heard. I didn't know how to take that. It felt like somebody was stabbing me over and over again. It was hella pain coming to my heart. I didn't know how to go on, it was some crazy shhh.

So basically RIP Burger. I was just with him the day he got shot and we went our ways.

Separate way and later that night.... R.I.P. Burger

-Clay-Dizzle

From The Beat: That's a good way to describe the pain, like being stabbed over and over again. Violence isn't just about the people who get killed, it's about the agony of the loved ones who survive. Has the pain gotten easier to deal with as time passes?

The Life I'm Living

This life I'm living is hell. It's all about sitting here locked up in a cell. I wish there was a way I can get out, but ain't old enough to make bail. I hate the way my life is, but the money is good.

I wish I can change it if I could, but I can't help it. One way to survive in this life you gotta be a G and know one thing in life it's militant on these streets. There are people that will kill you in order for them to eat, so to my people who died because of that, RIP.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: Are you one of those people who are willing to kill another human-being to eat? Your circumstances change when your way of thinking changes. You stated that you hate the way you are living, but it seems to us that your love for the streets is greater than your hate.

Solid

I'm a gangsta. I'm too solid to break.

The life I'm living is real so I can never be fake.

I treat the game like some pearl. I got in deep and I love it.

It's always hot on the block, but still post in the oven

And I'm a tell you its nothing! go ahead and ask me what is it? This block living is grimey but we be feeling exquisite.

The shhh I spit is explicit, at times these people be scared If you don't like what I'm saying I guess I'll call you a square.

I don't got time for the cops because I ain't telling or snitching.

That's why I cut on the cops like coke that's cooked in the kitchen

I put in work for the set, that's why I get my respect.

I mess with youngsters and vets who take flight like a jet.

That's why I'm keeping it gangsta they don't like what I say because I'm doper than hop and I be doper than yay.

I'm so hood for this world that's why I carry a glock and if you looking for me I'll probably be on the block.

-Gumby

From The Beat: What block? A block that the police can chase you off anytime they get ready. The block that has someone else's name on all it's street signs. A block that's own by the government but you are ready to kill someone over it. Don't play the role of a lost boy in a confusing world.

RIP Wicho

I can't believe you really gone.

I remember when I was kickin' it with you

Three days before I got locked up. We was

Posted with the homies,

Ridin' around in them G-thangs, with the homies.

It's good though, I'm gonna see you one day.

-Young Slips

From The Beat: Too many people keep dying. Do you see any way to end this terrible cycle of violence?

A True Friend

I think a true friend will never lead you into danger and would always try lead you down the right path. But a true friend will also help you when you are in danger and will face the danger with you head on if he's a real friend.

'Cause sometimes it's no way around the danger... but a real friend won't run away when danger is there but well be there for you.

A true friend would do anything to hurt you in any way but will help you get around it or face the danger head on.

For example I remember when I was younger and I was playing baseball with a couple of friends from the hood. Some old dude ended up hitting me in the face with a hard ball. At the time I was like 11, and the dude was 16.

So when the dude hit me with the ball, my brother ran over there and was about to put a beating on bra. But bra ended saying sorry and I said it was good. I just used that as an example 'cause my brother had my back and that's what a true friend does ...and that my brother really loved me.

-King Dave

From The Beat: That's a good story about your brother, especially because you weren't doing anything wrong when that older guy tried to mess with you. When it gets more confusing is when the danger comes from dirt you're doing - like a true friend might back you up on a mission, but an even truer friend

Trying to Stay Out

Yo Beat! This is Lil' Toro just another day. Trying to stay out of trouble but just can't say off the block, so I keep coming back and that's wack but where I'm at keeps bringing me back and I hate that, so when I get out I will try to move so I can improve on not coming back and that's that.

- Toro

From The Beat: Remember, you have choices, and if living the gangsta mentality is what you are about, then, well, be prepared for further nightmares!

Saying No

Well I'm going to talk about how hard it is for me to say no...

Well maybe it's because I'm only a young teen, but it's really hard for me to say no.

Like one time when my friend told me to run from my group home, I did because she wanted to see me do it. Well, it was my choice. I could've said no, but she asked and she was gonna pick me up so might as well just go right? Well later I decided not to go back 'cause we were having too much fun. Then I knew there were gonna be consequences.

-Julia

From the Beat: It's an important first step that you can recognize your weakness when it comes to saying no. Next, you have to start saying it. Especially when you know it's the best thing for you and your future.

Rest in Paradise

RIP Gabe, Daddy, Dame, Tall Kev, Lil Bob, Jeremy

What's up with y'all. I hope all you ninja's restin' in paradise. Man It ain't been the same without y'all man, and y'all already know we keeping it lit fo' y'all.

I see y'all when I get up there bras -- RIP all ma ninjas and Daddy I love you. I'll see you when I get up there

-Von

From The Beat: You don't need to be in a rush to get up there, Von. If you truly want to 'keep it lit' for all the young men who were cut down before their time, do it by getting your own life together and helping end the violence for the new youngsters coming up.

"Don't Live-life Scared,"

I live by my initials (aka the title of this piece)

'cause that's how I was raised

God is something that I wished that I praised

My daddy told me to live by initials: Don't live life scared

He told me 5-0 and life will never be fair

People think they knew my daddy but they don't shhh

Swoll wasn't my daddy wife he didn't love that b****

My daddy didn't care about his family now I wish he did

All he really loved and cared about

Was his money and his three kids

My dad tried to give us the best

But me and Nee-Nee wanted to be like him

When I was chubby he would joke and tell me hit the gym

My daddy said forget his family and sold

Weed and coke with his friends

Not knowing his friends would put his life to a end.

-Derrick

From The Beat: It's a hard weight to bear - knowing that on the one hand, you loved your dad and he loved you, on the other he was too caught up to see that his friends weren't his friends at all, and that the life he'd picked was hurting the children he loved. Have you learned lessons from his mistakes - about how to choose friends, or how to live?

The Life In The Hall

Life in the hall really sucks.
There's bad food,
It's cold in the cells.
Fights happen every day,
people get pepper sprayed.
School in the hall is boring.

I pray everyday hoping on my next court date that I'll get out.
In the hall you start missing your family more.
I've been to the hall six times.
The court now is trying to send me to a group home.
When I get out I'm going stop smoking marijuana.

-Arikash

From The Beat: The halls is designed the way it is for a reason. It could be a cold reality check or it can be your preparation for the big house. The choice is yours.



RIP Jada

RIP to my niece Jada.
I will never forget you and I will always miss you...
I love you with all my heart,
Victory is yours and it will always be.
Love always, your uncle JJ.
You're my baby girl
And no one can take that from you
Every time I look up in the sky
I know that there's a star with your name on it,
Shine brighter than ever! RIP Jada

-Lil' Miami

From The Beat: Even with the sorrow of your loss, this poem left us picturing your love shining in the sky like the stars you write about. Thanks for sharing your heart with The Beat!

Saying No, Easy!

No is my favorite word. There was hardly a time when it was tough for me to say no. But if I had to choose, it was up in Oakland with my partners smoking blunts and thizzin' when this dude around 17 tried to spit game at me.

When he was done spitting game I was checking him out and he was hella fine, with long dreads, around 6'5 and muscular. I was going to start using my mouth piece until I saw my ex boo with him and found out they were partners so of course I was mad, but I don't funk wit my exes patnas so I just said no, I'm straight and kept it lit.

-Young H

From the Beat: This is a great example of saying no. But do you ever feel peer pressured to do things you don't want to do? If so, what helps you stay strong?

"Sacrifice" My Child

I'm sacrificing my every move
My every breath
My every word
And anything left
I have a child in
My stomach, so God
Won't let anything
But my best.

Giving up the game.
The life of tears and pain
To be a mother,
Like no other.
I wouldn't change
Before, but now
I have to.

Have to let go
Of the partying
The drugs, the life
Of a young thug.
I have to sacrifice
Things that aren't right
So I can sleep at night,
And so I know baby
Will have a good life.
Take time to mend my
Pain, take time to learn
New things

'Cause I've never knew
Anything else.

I was a wild child
Because no one knew
What or how I felt.
So now I'm sacrificing
That life & that pain
For a new life & a new gain
A love that will remain.
It comes with an innocence,
An unpriceable gift.
I will sacrifice till
I have nothing left.
To promise my child
The best of the best
Never to see the
Life I have lived.

Never to cry the tears
I will cry.

It's the hardest change
I'm going to make
But I know for a certain
It's no mistake

I take each day to make
A lil' more change

'Cause in late November my
Life will never be the same.

So I sacrifice my life
And anything left to be
A mother that loves her
Child more than anything else
And to guarantee my child
Loves the life they were dealt.

-Moriah

From The Beat: This poem speaks with true music and grace about a mother's love. We can picture the day, years from now, when your child has the opportunity to read what you wrote - and the beauty of it is that you are "sacrificing" things that were hurting you, so the things you are giving up are things you can do without!

Juvenile Hall Ain't The Shhh

Juvenile Hall really got
My balls sitting here staring
At these four blank walls
Try to play staff for a
Straight through call. The devil
Trying break me but I aint
Gone fall. I grew up too
Fast I tried to walk before
I crawled gotta get a
Real job so I can
Ball till I fall.

-Donald

From The Beat: That's the way to go is through this corporate field. People with jobs are making more money then dudes that are out there hustling illegally now a days. Why not make the job field your new hustle. Something you don't have to worry about going to jail for doing.

Jail

As I sit in my cell man I really want to yell
'Cause I want to free and be with my family
As they sit there and wait for me over there on my
street.
Got to get out and go back to school got to get an
education
Ain't gonna be no fool.
Got a goal in my life that's all I got to do
Got to stay off the streets
Pray to God to help me be the best
I can be and stop my rob, ask for job
'Till I'm 18 and when I'm on my own
Getting my career started
Get my mamma off coach
And put her on a throne.
But still as I sit in my cell
The only thing I can do is sit there and grow my hair.
As I'm in jail, gotta make use of my time
Gotta go to school get some credit
'Cause only God knows where I'm headed
So as I sit there all I'm gonna do is think about my life
And have to change it when I'm free.
The End.

-Joshua

From The Beat: Funny - you write the end, but the way this flow ends up it feels like the beginning - the beginning of a new life, and a new way of being in the world, being free not only in body but in mind. What's the first step you plan to take to make this new life happen?

Kill or Be Killed: An Interview

TBW: The only way to survive is to kill, is this true?
It depends what kind of life you live, but where I live
that's how it be. 'Cause we funk in' all over Oakland. So
that makes it true in my area. But what I mean by the only
key to survive is kill is if you don't kill who you funk in'
with, they gon' kill you, and how you gonna survive if you
dead?

TBW: Is there a way to walk away from the "funkin'"?
No because if somebody gonna wanna kill you, they ain't
gonna stop looking for you until they kill you.

TBW: So does that mean you're trapped?
Yeah

-Reese

From The Beat: The way you describe it here, it's like being caught up and on the outs is almost as much of a prison as it is being in a jail. There are no choices... and outside factors still decide what a person can do. What about leaving? Getting out of town? Do you know people who were in this situation who figured out a non-violent way out of it?

The Life

Bed sink, toilet, desk, chair, and window
Maximum security turning me to a weirdo
Walking up in the morning you can't do whatever you
please
What ever on you tray that's what you got to eat
Going to school attending these boring classes
No sunlight, I think I going blind I need glasses
"Time up, times up get out" 5 minutes of shower
Dirty socks, shirt, underwear and dirty towel
I got a Lexus S400 on twenty-two
But now brown khaki ugly shoe shirt away blue
Raise your hand before you get up and move
I use to get a sidekick, hit me three way
No phone no TV no music got to do what the staff say
But I'm a soldier so it don't matter to me
I'm gon' get mine regardless no matter where I be
Is me against the world and that a fact G
All I can do is pray every night
Oh well screw it that just the life.

- Lil' T

From The Beat: Getting yours, at this point, is partly about knowing how to be true to yourself, how to make the best of a situation, how to grow inside and stay mentally free no matter what the system decides. And you get a little more free with every poem you put your heart into - keep the flows coming, they'll keep your blood "flowing"

Be Careful Who You Hang With

Dear rookies,

This Nell. I just want to put something out there. If
you messing with ninjas who ain't solid, you ain't solid
so step your game up.

It's a new year and on these streets ninjas ain't playing
no games for real. Shhh getting real militant. So if you
ain't on your shhh, you will get hit. This goes for all you
who want to be thugs and think y'all hard.

Just play your cards smart 'cause I'm tired of hearing
so many family member crying. So be smart and hang
with ninjas who are solid and stick with your family
'cause blood is always gone be thicker than water. I'm
out.

- Nell

From The Beat: Good point! What do you mean with "ninjas that are solid? Why not advise them not to hang with people who can get them in trouble, and find friends who can pass them a book instead of bottle of beer or a blunt?

The Real

My finger up to the system
And all respect to those
Who fall victim to no lead-way
But in the world living life free play
And much peace to the victims
Of that he say she say
Thousands of hours steady thugging
And just block hugging
Get free live it up
Pass me freedom and I
Promise I won't give it up
Anxious for a release date
Ready for the next step
And I'm ready to do right...
As sure as Jesus wept.

-T-Rex

From The Beat: We believe you - now it's about convincing that judge. And also, have you convinced yourself that you can leave the negative behind? Do you have people that are positive whom you can count on?

Back In The Halls

What's good Beat? This yo' boy Lil' Curt, hit you with the no braina. Yo boy boy back on some funny shhh. I went down for a warrant. I ran from Anglin. I know some of y'all, like, "Where the hell that's at?"

It's a hour away from Napa. I should've waited for my PO, but shhh happens. I enjoyed the little time I was on the run, but now it's time to look at where they about to send me off to next.

I want to go to the loft but they not messin' with me. They talking bout somewhere far, but I just gone keep denying them till I get what's best for me and what's not.

But anyways, I'ma holla at The Beat next week. Until then, stay up

-Lil' Curt

From The Beat: When you get out and turn right around and come back, we have to ask if that "no braina" is you! You say you know what's best for you, but the fact that you do the things that allow the system to lock you in a cage tells us that you may not be the best judge of what's in your best interest. Yes, sometimes "shhh happens," but more often, someone makes it happen.

Maybe Baby

Twenty minutes of pleasure
Eight months I've been in pain
my baby daddy left me
And my baby has no name
May 8, 2008, is the day my son is due
I hope I get up outta here
But if not, what can retrieve 'im
He could've went with his daddy
But he don't even want to see 'im
Twenty minutes of some damn bullshhh
This ninja thought I was out tryna trick
Eight months up in my stomach
Now he talkin' 'bout he don't want it
(To be continued...)

-Sade

From The Beat: We wish we could say that this is the first time we've read a story like this, but, unfortunately, it's all too common. When children have children, expecting them to act responsibly may be expecting more than they can deliver. This is not to let your baby's daddy off the hook, but only to say that we are not surprised. Far too many grown men act like little boys in relation to women and children, so it's no surprise when little boys act like little boys. The lesson we hope you learn is that you must be the responsible one, not just for your unborn child, but to protect yourself from any further examples like this one. After all, there are many ways to protect yourself from pregnancy (as well as from STDs which are now epidemic among teenage girls).

I Work For Mines

It ain't always perfect and for sure damn sure, standin' steady don't get you nowhere. As for, me I get mines. And I get it on my own, with my ass on the line to get where I wanna get. It means much mo' to me that way.

I like workin' my ass off. That way nobody got shhh to tell me. I'm grateful for all my folks that I can count on. I know I got the best of the best. And no doubt that when I do need em' they gone be there for me, and I can most def count on 'em.

But unless I'm near death, I won't do it. My pride is high and my independence provides me self-power to get it together. Life is hard, dependin' how you dress her.

-Get Guap

From The Beat: It's hard to know where your "self-power" and "getting it on your own" means when all that has put you behind these walls. If those things get you where you want to get, like you say, then does that mean you wanted to get here? We think you may have to look at yourself more critically, because something about your life isn't working for you. Independence is good. Pride is good. Work is good. But if all that together can't keep you free, then something isn't good. We'd like a little of your insight on that.

Stay Up

Wha's up with the homies
I heard y'all be talking ish
And actin' phony,
On some straight-ass boloney
Lil' Payasa getting out soon,
Y'all gone see I'ma be shinin' and stayin' tycoon.
Cause in here I'ma butterfly stuck in a cocoon
Shaooooo! (Ha Ha)
So yeah, y'all wanna know where I'm from?
California, San Francisco, Baby.
The city of the classics where the youngsta's crazy.
To my peeps, stay coo' and be safe
Aim high, lay low
So the 5-0 won't have to mess up yo' flow
And get back locked up behind the YGC doors!

-Lil' Payasa

From The Beat: If you're a butterfly locked here in a cocoon, it's because you've put yourself here. It's hard to take advice about how to stay free when the person giving the advice hasn't figured out how to do that in her own life! If your goal is to "stay tycoon," then your freedom won't last long, and the butterfly you claim to be will, once again, be shorn of its wings. Slow and steady wins the race. The rest is a child's fantasy.

Praying To Stay Out

My name is Deontae, and I came to juvenile. The first time I was here for 31 days, a month. I thought I learned my lesson, but I thought I didn't. But like three months ago, me and my friend went up to a school called Gate Way, and they took a I-pod from this boy. Then I was there and the boy said I punched him. I did but, I said I didn't but I don't think I deserve to be in here.

I hang with the wrong people. I do things I shouldn't do. But you know, I pray to God every day that I be safe and I do good but this one thing, I mean though, fo' real. I really want to stay out of here fo' real and I pray that I get the heck out of here and I stay out of here fo' real.

-Deontae

From The Beat: Okay, Deontae, if you did what you say you did, then why do you think you don't deserve to be here. What do you deserve? Do you think prayer is a one-way street, that all you have to do is pray to God and He will answer your prayers? Is it possible that God is praying to you, too, and waiting for you to answer His prayers? We know what you want from God, but what do you think God wants from you?

Respect My Mind, Dawg!

What's good lil' round? You know how this young ninja stay rockin', dawg. I'm still in this hole keeping it gutta like no otha. Ya heard me. Check it out though, dawg. I'm finna give you publishers a piece of my mind.

Y'all be talkin' that straight-up BS in y'all response fo' real. All bull to the side, though dawg, somebody go mess y'all up fo' real. No lie. Ninja's don't be feelin' them responses my ninja, straight up. I ain't tryna get on ya helmet, I'm just givin' it to you straight up. I ain't go sugar coat shhh, dawg. I'ma keep it all the way 100%, dawg. Just get at a ninja how you would want a ninja to get at chu, bruh. Respect a ninja mind. This goes for everybody.

Ha ha ha! That's all folks.

-Young Iggs

From The Beat: Well here's the deal, Young Iggs. We respect any mind that teaches, that takes a subject seriously and gets below the surface so that we can learn from it. We respect that you're keeping it real with us here, but that's a two-way street, dawg! It sounds like you want to hear only fake answers instead of us keeping it real with you! We're looking for you to give us "a piece of your mind" that has value to others, because it's based on some deeper thought. When that happens, then you can expect to get responses you like better than this. But always know that we're going to keep it real with you, just like you say you're going to keep it real with us. Like the old saying goes, "If you can't stand the heat, then get out of the kitchen!"

My Rap

You already know from the town all 'bout the 'hood
Hustlas on the block tryna come up
Girls on the track tryna give it up
Dope dealer youngstas sellin'
My young ones tryna to fade up

From the street raised up on the block
Smokin', just chillin', not thinkin'
Black people wanted cops lookin', searchin'
Gang bangin' young ninjas shootin' heat fully loaded
People ready to flash, talk behind your back
Even yo' best friends is your enemies
Fighting, drinking
Next minute yo' homey flat out on his back
Bullet in his head, blood on your hands
Askin' the Lord who's next
Check
Everybody know 'bout ya boy, Lil' Rome on the mic
spittin'
Coming at you quick
Can you hear the fear in yo' lungs, son
Quit feeling yourself
My shhh going platinum
This how they describe me: s-e-x-y
Got the females on my arm
Got that one million dollar smile drive them wild
Got nine lives

-Jarome

From The Beat: You're rap got a little too nasty at the end. Safe that childish stuff for a bathroom wall, and respect The Beat enough to be serious. What you really have on your arm is a bunch of people telling you what to do day and night, so it really doesn't matter how sexy you are. Nobody wants to be a sexy slave...

Wish I Knew My Grandparents

I want to talk about me never getting a chance to meet my grandparents, my grandma or grandpa, because the ones on mom's side, my grandma had died before I was born and grandpa had passed when I was like five. The ones on my dad side I don't know never before, period. Ain't seen him in hella long, and I got a lil' sister that I never met before.

That's all I got to say.

(P.S. Mike, if you don't put this in The Beat, I'm gone get in yo' ass!)

-Lano

From The Beat: You were cheated out of knowing them, and they were cheated out of knowing you. We hope you are doing what you need to do to live long, so that you will at least have the joy of knowing your own grandchildren, and they will have the joy of knowing you. We have no comment about Mike's ass!

Tired Of Suckas

You know what I am tired of? I am tired of these people actin' hella sneaky, thinking they a bad ass. They remind me of the show with Snoopy... and all y'all know who you are. Man, they thinkin' that they are sick, but when the beef comes down, they acting hella scared.

These people ain't nothing but 100% fakes. All they know is to talk behind the vent of door. You ain't shhh and you know who you are. You a bunch of suckas!

-Lil' Ryder

From The Beat: And do you know what we're tired of? Boys who get themselves locked behind walls who still think they're better, meaner, stronger, realer than other boys who get themselves locked behind walls. Focus on yourself, and not on others. When you gain control over your own life and stop handing your freedom over to strangers, then you might have valuable advice to give to others. Until then, you don't have a foundation to preach from.

Do You, I'ma Do Me

I can't do what everybody else doing
I can only do me
I can only do what's best for me
I can't do what's best for you
I can't be me
I can't pretend to be anything else
I'ma do me!

-Monet

From The Beat: Did you mean to write, "I can't be me?" If so, what did you mean? We'd like to read your description of what it means to do you and to be you?

Grief

One time, I was in a group home. My friend and my cousin, they were running from the police on a motorcycle. They got away from the police and crashed, and my cousin flipped over the car and hit his head on the cement and died.

My friend broke his leg and the doctor said he'd never walk again, and he might drool and not be able to talk again. They tried to give him hecka surgeries because he was in a coma, but his mom said no because she didn't want him to be retarded, and all that. But now he all the way back. He walkin', he can run — not all the way run — but he run with a limp. He play basketball with us.

In my grief, I felt like running away from my group home, but I got a home pass. I was smokin' and drinkin', and I was messed up. I felt like killin' somebody, but I didn't and now I'm all right.

-Ray Bay Bay

From The Beat: We're sorry your cousin died in this situation, especially because it didn't have to happen. Your friend is much luckier, but he also paid a price. We wonder whether he is more careful with his life now than he was then. And we also wonder about your anger, and wanting to "kill somebody." Who would you have killed? Who was responsible? Who do you blame? Does this tragic event make you more careful when you are driving? Do you use your seat belt and drive within the speed limits?

Hard To Say No

Man, to me I think it's hard to say no because, say, like your homies like to hit this blunt. Of course you gonna hit it, because you don't want to be a sucker. You shouldn't care what other people thinking about you, 'cause it really don't matter.

-Gilly Rad

From The Beat: Yes, it is hard to say no. You say you shouldn't care what others think about you, but then you say you're gonna hit that blunt if your homies do 'cause you don't want to be a sucker. So, do you care what your homies think about you?

Lost And Not Found

Have you finally found the one you given your heart to only to find that one wont give their heart to you? I know I'm young, but I can't help who I love. To give love and feel like you're not getting it back... does that mean give up on love, or just that person?

I don't wanna give up on him. I just hope one day he can feel the same. Have you ever had someone steal your heart away? Do just about anything to make them feel the same....

-Ne'Nee

From The Beat: No one can really say what love is. But we do know that when love is not returned, it hurts. We don't know whether you should give up on him or not, but you are young, and we feel certain that you will have other loves in your life, and that the feelings you have for him now won't always be there. When you're feeling what you're feeling, it's hard to believe that, but we believe you'll look back on this love from a different place in your life and not be so bothered by it.

Fight Night

Man, this one time we was at the bowlin' alley, right. We was all with like some females, and then this one guy walks up to us saying that he was finna pull off on ninjas. So then me and my ninjas took off on him and stomped him out. So then we had to scoot before the police came. Afta that we went and chilled with them females, and that's what happened that night.

-K-Clap

From The Beat: Something is missing from this story because it doesn't make sense that one person would come and challenge a table full of y'all. So you piled on and beat him up. How brave of you! (We wish you would use The Beat to say something of value, to teach something of importance, or just to ask yourself questions about a way of living that so easily leads to your temporary slavery...)

To Christian

The first time I met somebody that loves me on some real type stuff, I take it for granted. Why? I don't know. But now that I'm in this same predicament, I see how much I love you when at first I thought you was only good for sex. But after three years, that young kid shhh let up.

I hope my ninja's don't think I'm a punk for expressin' the real, but why should I care because what kinda ninja is you judging me on how I feel. But I been in this room thinkin' all this over. I know what we got is real, but I do so much outta pocket stuff I know it's gone be hard for you to heal.

But the reason for this stuff is to let you know I'm ready for something that's real.

Dedicated to Christian with all the love in the world.

-Demetrius

From The Beat: If anyone thinks less of you because you express love for another person, then they're thinking like a child, because, believe us, every adult wants the kind of love you believe you have found. So it's what you feel that counts, and you should never have to apologize to anyone for expressing love. (We wish more people would apologize for expressing hate, but never for expressing love.)

No More

What's good with The Beat? Well, as you know, I'm still this weak-ass juvenile hall! Forget it! Can't complain now 'cause I'm the reason y I'm in here doin' what I'm doin'...

But yeah, when I get out everything is gone be much more of living my life than living the street life...

(To be continued...)

-Ulala

From The Beat: Well, at last you're beginning to tell us a little about what you hope to accomplish when this experience is behind you. We're all ears. Put it down for us.

Putting On A Tough Exterior

Once upon a time I came to YGC. I got put in the room with a guy that lied and smoked rocks. He used to tell all these wild stories. When I left his room I found out they where lies because he said people's names that I knew, and when I asked them, they said they didn't know him.

He used to cry every night, but when I was there he didn't. He pissed in the bed and always had to change his sheets every morning.

-Money The Don

From The Beat: What you write is sad. It reminds us that we are putting children into cages and hoping, foolishly, that it solves some problem. Boys, especially, find it very hard to be completely honest with other boys about their fears, about their loneliness, about anything they perceive as weakness, so they front and build a tough exterior for the world to see. It's only after we grow up and look back that we realize that all human beings have fears, experience pain and share similar emotions. We're glad that he didn't cry when you were with him. That says something good about you.

Grief

When somebody dies, the feeling is very painful. When you lose someone that you really loved, you can't get them out of yo' heart. I tried to think about the good times we used to have, the times we argued.

Just think the positive stuff that the person taught me or told me to do. What the stuff I mean positive is that he wanted me to finish high school, get a job, be successful in life.

-Mike O

From The Beat: We like the way you focus on the positive, even in your grief over losing someone you love. We think that the best way to honor the dead is to do good in their name, and to live long and carry their memory with you.

Grief

Could make you or break you. It's all about how you deal with it. Everybody deals with grief in their own way. Some cry, some kill, others kill themselves.

Me, I hold it inside and try to let it out in a positive way. But it's hard when you lose people back-to-back and don't know when you gone be next and people gonna grieve over you... It's a ongoing process.

-MB

From The Beat: Yes, life always leads to death, and that makes grief an ongoing process. We wish you could give us some details, maybe some examples, of how you try to deal with grief in a positive way. When has it worked for you? When has it failed?

To My Daughter

It doesn't matter what they say

'Cause I'm gonna love you anyway

It doesn't matter what they do

'Cause I'm always gonna be with you

To my daughter Angelic

-Armando

From The Beat: We hope you can keep this promise that you're "always gonna be with" Angelic. She needs your beautiful self, not just your beautiful words!

Fun And Games

Man, a'ight, I'ma tell y'all about this one time I went to this party, and that party was hella boosie, so me and my brush cut to this other party. It was me and my ninjas. So we up in the party dancing with hella females for about 30 mins. until my ninja took off on this ninja because he was talking hella shhh. So he called all us to get on him, so we got on that ninjas. The boys came, so we wiggled hella fast.

Went to downtown Oakland, blew two fat-ass chops, was on like shhh. That ninja must've said something to me, I don't remember what it was, but I got on him gave that ninja grief. So then my other ninja broke it up because the bus had came.

So we hopped on. I went to the house, ate, took a shower, watched TV, then fell asleep. I had a crazy-ass dream that I was goin' to jail and about two weeks later, guess where I'm... at YGC. Damn! That's something, ain't it. Karma is hell.

-Whooda

From The Beat: We had to take out a fair amount of this piece because we don't allow place names, street names — or the names of your homies, unless they want to put their business out there, but that's up to them.) As for what you wrote, was the dream of going to jail connected to all the fighting you did, or were there other things that led you here? When your reality is jail, and your dreams of also of jail, it's probably time to examine your life a little more closely than you've done up to now...

Saying No

Sometime it's hard to say no to people you know, love, or care about. But the best thing to do is do what you believe in and what you think is best for your problem, and that don't always mean sayin' no. It just mean to do what's best.

I learn by watching and being around older people that give good advice and not people that will set a bad influence.

-Felisha

From The Beat: We appreciate this piece, Felisha, because in order to learn from people giving good advice, we have to be prepared to hear "No" from time to time. If children are not told no, they never learn not to run into the street or to play with fire. Sometimes, no is the most important word we can hear to keep us safe.

Feeling The Young Dunny

What's modulatin' with The Beat? This the young dunny Cam, live and on site, trying to get up out this thang. But I ain't doin' too bad. I know people out there thinkin' bout a ninja. I didn't even write her or even try to get in contact with her, but she feeling the young dunny. All I did was go to her house a couple of times with my lil' bra. But damn, I'm already committed to another female off top.

-Cam

From The Beat: Well, if this female wants to get with you after only a couple of visits to her house, you must be putting off some powerful pheromones (you'll have to look it up...). But tell us about the other female you're committed to?

Best Story Ever

Yo, what's good with The Beat, man? Yeah, I'm still in this damn place, maybe. But I gotta story for you.

One day, I saw this ninja walkin' in the 'jets with the toast. He wasn't worried about no boys or nothin'. He hopped in his whip, picked his young ninja up, and was rollin' around.

He let his enemies have it. I was like, "Damn, bra don't be playing like bra sick." I heard he didn't even care. He just drove off smooth, lit up a blunt of some grapes, and drove to his girl house, had his young ninja in the living room playin' the 360 Saints Row, and that was it.

-Bb

From The Beat: When we read a piece like this, we wonder how the same people that do this can also pretend that they pray to god for anything. How could a person so disrespect what god has created (there's no greater disrespect than deliberate killing), then talk about going to paradise? It doesn't make sense. Can you explain it to us?

Grief

What's up with The Beat? This ya boy Davey-D up in here holding it down. Well, I am going to tell you about a time when I lost somebody real close that I lost on the block.

Well, my homie Slim Thugga was killed a few years ago on the block 'cause somebody didn't like the way he did things. This is something that will never leave me, that will stay with me forever. This is something you cannot let go if you love the person to death. I feel pain every time somebody says his name.

All I got to say to the people that done lost somebody, just take your mind off all the grief and stress that's going on. Just get on with your life and what you do 'cause grief is not a good thing.

-Davey-D

From The Beat: Sometimes, though, you can't escape grief even when you want to. How do you take your mind off it? Do you read? Listen to music? Drink? What?

Grief

What's up with The Beat. This ya boy Goo Troop. Yeah, though, I'm pretty sure everybody knows what grief is. If you don't know, that's good...

I done lost almost all my thugs to this shhhh, man, and that shhhh hurt. Recently, I just lost my grandmother and that hit me the hardest.

But to all people in here, hold yo' head up. They can't hold a real ninja down fo'eva. Amerikkka, the land of the free.

-Goo Troop

From The Beat: It's tragic how many young people lose everything for games that they didn't invent, and can't even remember how or where they started, over things as meaningless as a block or a piece of real estate they don't even own. We're sorry about your grandmother, too, but at least she lived a full life. By the way, if they can't hold "a real ninja" down forever, we wonder if those 2,000 teenagers serving life without the possibility of parole were all fake?

Midget With Tourettes

There was a dog, a midget, and a green kangaroo. The dog had three legs, the midget has tourettes and the kangaroo can talk. One day as the midget was riding the three-legged dog and shouting obscenities, he met the green kangaroo.

"Forget you," yelled the midget. So the kangaroo kicked him off the dog. Now the midget has broken neck to go with his tourettes. The green kangaroo was green because the midget colored him with a hi-liter. After coloring him with the hi-liter, the midget and his dog killed the kangaroo and slow roasted it over a fire. The moral of the story is don't mess with a midget with tourettes.

-Rhys

From The Beat: For the life of us, we don't get this joke! But we'll try to remember the moral, so if we ever meet a midget with tourettes, we'll be very careful what we say...

I'm Gone Por Vida

Now, it's time for so long, Beat. I'm out of here by Friday to do a group home in el valle (valley) Visalia for eight months till I'm 18. It feels like I just woke up emotionally. I felt like I was hibernating. I can't come back 'cause if I do it's a wrap — the pen or to YA. And I got a strike and two felonies.

I've been down since last year from Alameda to here to take care of a warrant and another charge that got dropped. I've been to all the units starting in B1 through B4 to unit 2, 4, 7 then to 6. So I got to give thanks to Kurt, Chen, Untie, Coogler, Coob Tanner, Sully, Sidey, Ms. Jacobs, Ms. M, Cooks, Morris... all the staff that watched me grow from a boy to a teen, from a teen into a man.

To my first PO, Tony Hurley, thank you. You never gave up on me. Howey Chares, Lorena de Haras and Derrick Hom, my next POs. Much love an' respecto.

To my homies, keep ya heads up and never let it drop. When y'all get out., I got chu. I been down for too long. We still striving for the cause.

-G Shadow

From The Beat: Oh, how we wish you would redefine "the cause" and begin to see the treasure that you are. Like all the POs you give thanks to for watching you grow, and especially those who would not give up on you, The Beat also sees something very special about you, something that makes us cry if it is lost because you don't see it in yourself. Even when we hate the message you sometimes try to express, we always love the way you express it, and we will miss having you in our workshops. (You might deny it because you think of it as a weakness, but we recognize a deep sweetness buried within your heart, a loving boy who has built an armor of protection that has not protected you very well.) Take very good care, Gangsta Shadow, and write us from wherever you are. We want to know that you are safe and well.

Stop Thinking About It

Wha's up with The Beat? Man, grief huh.

Grief could be hard depending on what happens. Me personally, I get over something by just stop thinking 'bout it. But if it's personal loss, like my thugs or family members, then that stick with me my whole life because all people I really associate with me, then part of me gone, like.

The pain come and go but I just be coo', like smoke a blunt or something, get my mind off it. Never heal when my thugs gone.

-J R

From The Beat: What do you do when you can't stop thinking about it? Do you ever allow yourself to feel the pain without putting up a chemical barrier, like drink or smoke? Do you ever just sit and cry?

God And Family In My Corner

Man, I can't wait to I get out of this jail. This time it was different. I didn't really take this shhh to the heart because it was going to make things so much harder. I just thought about my family and how they are in my corner, even when I let them down.

All I can think about is when my mom called me her "jail bird daughter." That made me feel hella bad. That's not what kind of rep I want. At night I just pray and say." God, would take care of me?" So I leave it in His hands. I know He got me.

-Domo

From The Beat: It's easy to think about how much you miss your family when you're locked up, and easy to forget when you're free and back with them. We hope you remember how much they have sacrificed for you, and how much they support you, because they want what's best for you. God is praying to you, too. Do you hear His prayer? Can you give Him what he's praying for?

Almost Home

I'm almost home, and I'm happy as hell. Got two more weeks 'til court, then I'm 'bout to do my time. Do my time get out the system. Get a job, finish high school and do better. Be with my family and my girl, and I'm going to still be kicking with my ninjas, but just keep shhh cool and not come back.

-E.B

From The Beat: Be very careful, EB. Sometimes, we can't have all that we want. Sometimes, we have to make hard choices. Finishing school and getting a job is your ticket to a better life, a life without cages. But kicking it with your homies is a ticket back to lock-up, even though you believe you can do both. When you keep a foot in two worlds, you're likely to split yourself right up the middle — and sooner or later, you're going to have to put your feet down together on one path. Good luck.

My Cousin Was Killed

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Tray. Man, I'ma talk about grief. When I was not even 15, my big cousin was killed and I was really heated. My aunty was going bad. That was her only son and her grandson was too.

I was really close to him. TIP Lil' Mitch. So I tried to be smooth but I couldn't. That's my fam bam, and I'ma always love you cousin till the day I get up there wit y'all.

But my word getting short. I'ma talk to y'all later.

-Tray

From The Beat: Every week, we have to read about the violent and unnecessary death of young people who should still be alive. And every week we have to say that our hearts go out to the survivors. And every week we have to remind our writers that everyone has people who feel as much love for their people as you feel for yours. As long as our hearts go out only to "our" loved ones but to no one else's, the madness will not stop. But, like we said, our hearts go out to you.

The Beautiful Curse

OK, I say I'm peepin' at it from a distance
Reminisce an' driftin', tryna replenish and diminish
resistance

Leaf twisted, I'm tryna figure the difference
From when we toured each other's worlds, numb
considerin' interest

You can remember attention and how I made ya toes curl
with my articulate sentence

Chea, we was makin' relations, that underrated invention
Meanin' we was the occasion 'cause we created the tension
Couldn't break it, so those who hate it slowly faded the vision

Wouldn't waste after we made it, ya know, prayed and
committed

But now we datin' to replace it, just erasin' the feelin's
Separatin', our exploration must have come to a finish
Support ain't givin', but I'm dealin' when confrontin'
beginnin's

Dedicate to no other women as long as somethin' is
swimmin'

In my stomach no other woman beat the sum of what's
missin'

Shhh, I'm goin' through the motions

Struttin' single but still devoted

Miss lady wanna elect me, I ain't tryna be promoted
My emotions is so explosive, but I ain't tryna be noticed

I'm tryna focus, "ya know," smokin' and copin'
No feelin' hopeless, 'cause it was worth it, though the shhh
didn't work

Chea, love hurts, but it's a beautiful curse

This for my Dream Girl, my Baby Mama and my daughter
Papa love his two ladies

This also for the rest of you chicks, man,
Y'all need to make these ninjas wake up and start showin'
y'all they care

Get some love from a ninja before y'all miss
Y'all too simple-minded these days, wake the hell up

Ninja don't want no dumb, weak-ass broad

That shhh ain't attractive at all

A ninja ain't a real goon if he gotta be super touch all the
time and can't accept his emotions

A ninja ain't a man unless he takin' care of real
responsibility, real shhh

Y'all gotta start makin' these ninjas give some real love out
Y'all degradin' y'all self, man

That shhh is sad

I love my baby mama and my daughter more than I love myself
It's more real ninjas like myself out there, you just ghott6a

stop being scared of commitment

Take pride in yourself

I know love hurt, but it's a beautiful curse

-P. Crooks

From The Beat: We don't know whether any of the girls you're addressing this poem to will take your advice, but respecting yourself is good advice for everyone. As far as love is concerned, by a certain age, nearly everyone has felt both the euphoria that comes with love, and the pain that also comes with it. When it hurts, it's hard to remember what a "beautiful curse" it can be, but when it's good, there's absolutely nothing better. We're glad you love your two ladies more than yourself — which means you're ready to stop doing the things that have taken you out of their lives temporarily so that you can be where you belong, with them.

Always Saying No

Man, I always say no! Like if a brother say, "Shut up," I'm like, "No brother, you shut up." Staff be like, "Talk dead." I'm like, "No ninja." Police be like, "You saw anything?" I be like, "No ninja. You see something?" So, I'm always saying, "No," ya dig!

-Money Rey

From The Beat: These are the easy examples of saying no. How about the hard ones — the times when your homies want you to do something that you think is wrong, but you go along anyway because you don't want to seem like a square or punk? Have you ever had the courage to say no in those situations?

Martin Luther King Jr

The Beat Within: Martin Luther King, Jr. was murdered forty years ago this week. There have been beautiful tributes to him, replays of his speeches, and speculations about who all killed him in documentaries on television all week long. We at The Beat were just wondering, what have you learned about Martin King in school, from your family, your community, your reading? What did his life mean to all of us and why did he die, do you think?

Panchito: I respect that guy (Martin Luther King, Jr.) He's a very influential dude.

Texas: He's a very motivational speaker. He was determined to make a change.

Anonymous: He was makin' a change.

T: He went from being determined to make a change to makin' a change.

TBW: He made brilliant, beautiful speeches about racism, poverty, civil rights and about the Vietnam War, which America was very involved in, in the sixties, while King was alive. He talked about how any war is really a war on the poor, because it's mostly the sons of poor families who end up getting drafted and sent to war. From what Martin Luther King said in his speech about the Vietnam War, apparently there were proportionally a lot more Blacks in the service, during the Vietnam War, than are represented in the about 12% that are in the US population as a whole.

T: Yeah, and it was mostly blacks that were on the front lines.

P: That's wrong, man. They put the minorities up front. The white soldiers were way in the back lines.

T: Then, later, they did the Million Man March.

TBW: That's right. The Million Man March was an outgrowth of King's protests. The March, which was organized by Louis Farrakhan, was to show that Black men deserved respect, good jobs, and they need to take responsibility to support and protect their families and raise their children.

T: They (Blacks in Birmingham, Alabama) boycotted the bus system for a year because Black people had to sit in the back of the busses. (During the boycott) people wouldn't ride the bus. They walked (to work and home again,) unless they got rides. Some white people helped them and gave them rides.

TBW: How else did Martin Luther King affect your generation? What did you learn from him?

P: Barack Obama's running for President of the US. But did you notice that they (the media) keep saying that Barack's name is Barack Hussein Obama? His middle name is Hussein? The CIA's trying to make him look like he's a hard-core Muslim, so he won't be elected President, or if he

wins, he'll be assassinated. They ain't gonna let him get elected, 'cause of the Muslims the US is at war against. TBW: What's up with being a Muslim? What if Barack were a Muslim? Could he still get elected President of the US if he were a Muslim?

P: Muslims be cool. My cousins say, "Never rob a cousin's store in the TL—Tenderloin, unless you got two or three behind you." My Arab folks and I go to all the (Arab) stores and ask, "Ya got the new swishers?" I go to one store, "Hey, Cousin!" Then I go to another store, "Hey, Cousin!" like we family.

TBW: Are you Arab?

P: Hell, no, I'm Filipino.

TBW: But you live with your family in the Tenderloin?

P: Yeah.

TBW: And a lot of your neighbors and local store owners are Arab?

P: Yeah.

TBW: And you're cool with them?

P: Hell, yeah. They my cousins.

TBW: Like your "play" cousins?

P: Yeah.

TBW: How else did Martin Luther King affect you all?

Texas: That's (Martin Luther King) where Tupac learned to rap. Police killed Tupac. LAPD went to Vegas. Tupac was a movement. Thug Life.

TBW: What about Shug Knight? He was driving away from the casino after the Tyson fight with Tupac in his car, when someone shot Tupac. Shot Shug Knight in the head, too. Why doesn't Shug Knight tell who shot Tupac? He was there.

Texas: Shug Knight can't snitch. He still went to jail after that, for a minute.

TBW: So you think the LAPD killed Tupac? Who do you think killed Martin Luther King? In a lot of specials they're having on television to commemorate the 40th anniversary of King's death, they talk a lot about who killed him. There are a whole lot of theories about who was his murderer. Who do you think killed King?

P: The KKK (Ku Klux Klan) and the white guy.

TBW: James Earl Ray?

A: I think the CIA.

P: Maybe the FBI and the CIA.

TBW: Well, there are a whole lot of theories out there about who killed him.

-Rob, Texas and Anonymous

From The Beat: You've obviously given a lot of thought about what Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and death has meant to civil rights, war, the poor, to the courage to speak your mind about what you think is right and wrong, to all of us. Is there anyone alive now who has the same courage, heart and stature, and sense of purpose and destiny he had? Who has earned your respect?

Is Anybody There?

Hello!? Is anybody there? Ha, ha. Naw, ain't nobody there. What? Wait, I hear 'em hello!? Is anybody there? Naw, they ain't out there. It's just you...

But they said they would be there; they said they'll wait for me. They said that they were gonna be here no matter what... I guess it was just me saying that, not them. They said they loved me. They told me they would never leave.

Wait... I hear 'em. Hello? Hello? Is anybody there? Ha, ha. Ain't nobody there. It's just you.

-Money Rey

From The Beat: We wish we understood who you are writing to — if you're writing to anyone at all. We can't tell if this is all happening in your mind, or whether there's some event behind your words. Can you give us an explanation of this mysterious piece?



Ain't No Jail Type

Man, being up in this thang is ugly for the first time. I ain't no jail type of guy. I like to be outside networking with people 'cause that's what it is. I rap with the Hustle Boy. Our album just came out, so that's a good thang. The bad part about it, though, is I ain't got my freedom right 'bout now. But I'ma be out.

It's good. Real people do real thangs, and I'm one of them dudes. I'ma do my time like a man, feel me.

-Young Heat

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that you're "no jail type of guy," but we'd like some more details about why that is. What makes "a jail type of guy," and what makes you different? What's your plan for when you get out of here... the plan that will keep you out of here?

Me And My Stolos From The Oakland Airport

My best story is--it was a summer day. I was sittin' on this block. I was talkin' to my friend and he said, "Let's go get a car." I said, "Where we gonna get a car from?" and he said, "We are to the (Oakland) airport."

So we arrived at the airport, (and got into the cars we chose from the rental lot) To steal rental cars, you just get in (the driver's seat,) lean back and when no one is looking, lean back, pull down the visor and the keys just drop in your lap. You gotta be bumper to bumper against the person's car in front of you, (and when he) puts the ticket in the machine (to get out of the lot) you go right out after him. There's no guy in the tollbooth checking, and the machine thinks only one car got out of the lot.

I got a PT cruiser and my homie got a Mustang out of the parking lot. Sometimes I get in a high-speed chase against the cops, the highway patrol (when we steal cars from the Oakland airport lot,) but this time (we had no trouble.) We drove both cars back to the city, goin' 150 (MPH) with no seatbelts. We got back to (our neighborhood,) picked up some more thugs. We went on a driving spree. We went to Oakland to get some toast (bread, money) then we went back to the city and got our sideshow crackin' and started bustin' doughnuts. Then the police came and busted it up and we went home. We just left the cars on the block when they ran out of gas.

I did get caught for a little Dodge Magnum thing (once.) They (the police) let me go home. I had to go to court for it, though. They tried to make me pay a \$1000 fine, but I didn't have no \$1000. I probably got a warrant for it, but I don't know. Maybe my mom got it in the mail, I don't know. I just went to court that one time. They said I had to pay that \$1000, but I never heard from them.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That is a good story, and you're a beautiful storyteller, but it doesn't sound like you're too far from it to be able to say you'd never do it again. You don't say if your homie and you had any close calls on the highway from Oakland to your neighborhood, but what if you'd smashed into another car or over the exit wall? Even if you came out all right, you'd never forgive yourself if someone got hurt or killed because of you.



Another Day At The Ranch

Yeah, man, it's ya boy Rob G, chillin' here at the Ranch. Man, I've been here at orientation level, about to hit Level One, and that means another forty weeks! But, yeah, I'm here, trying to stay focused, and keep my weeks.

It's hella canned over here. It's different from the halls, when we get phone calls once a week and we got to wake up early and go to school on weekdays, because it's mandatory, but there is some positives. You can wear your own shoes, white tees, beanies, and the only thing we wear that is their uniform is dickies, pants and jackets, and the food is a little better and we get commissary.

Well, Beat I'm gonna cut this off. Until I shut down.

-Rob Gs

From The Beat: Sounds like you're doing all right and will make it off the Ranch on time! You have a good attitude—to learn all you can from any situation, including and maybe especially the Ranch, for now. What programs do you wish the Ranch would offer, that would help the other guys and you on the outs?

Family = Support

What's good with The Beat? It's ya boy, Young Chink, holdin' it down as the usual. Today's topic, I am going to spit and acknowledge y'all on how family will support you even through the circumstances.

Family...very supporting and will help you through all the bad situations. If you look past the block, the thugs and the streets, your family will always be there when everyone is gone. When you're ill, locked up, or zoned out, your family will be there to guide you to the light. As for me, my mom is holdin' me down. I got some uncles and aunties holdin' me down, but my mom is the main source in holdin' me down. She brings me all the items I need, visits me faithfully when she's in the area, and gives me good conversation when we communicate. Well, that's about it. Just know even through the circumstances, your family is going to be there when you down and out. To my mom and my family, I love y'all more than life itself.

Keep yo' head up and never let the system see you sweat. Keep it solid and remain true.

-Chinky

From The Beat: You're really fortunate to have such a beautiful family, who is so good to you. Your mother probably appreciates your gratitude toward her. But if your mom seriously wanted to influence you to stop whatever you do to get arrested and brought into juvy, what should she do? Stop indulging you, bringing you whatever you need? Talk to you? Threaten to ask you to leave her house if you don't stop? Doesn't being a good parent include knowing when to discipline your child when s/he keeps messing up? What advice would you give your mother to help you, or will you listen to your own advice to her and stop by yourself?

I'm Changing

What's crackin' Beat? Well, I don't really have a topic for today, but I'm doing good! I'm second on the ranch list, so hopefully I'll leave soon. I just turned 18 on Feb. 25th,

so I need to get out and start my life fresh with my family. I'm graduating soon and quitting all drugs! I'm changing my life for my best interest and so I don't end up in the adult system. Stay up Beat!

-Mely

From The Beat: Good for you, and we'll do our best to stay up.

About Some Stuff

What's up Beat! It's Mario!

I got some stupid crap going on in my life right now. Well some punk is messing with my family. I think they're punks because they smash my mom's window as soon as they find out I'm locked up.

Let me put out a question out there if you get locked up and some fool messes with your house/cars, that makes your parents spend more money that they don't have, if you didn't understand it read it again and think about it. But in the meanwhile forget those fakes!

Today I found out they burned my homies' mom's house down with torches wit his little brother and mom in it.

-Mario

From the Beat: This is horrible. We too would be very hurt and angry. Remember, wrong does exist, people do horrible things. But you're showing exactly why it's wrong. If striking back, which we took out of your piece, means you're not there to protect your family, then what good does it do? It just means they have one less person to stand between them and doing something horrible. Stand up for what's right, don't let them drag you down with them.

This Mind, My Mind

My mind is gone in the zone,
but tell me have you ever seen a savage cry in his sleep
because dreams are trying to creep
damn this is a cold world
so cold that when you kill it's sad to say it
nine to the mind you got your going crazy inside
But I'm like a blind man going crazy
'cause I can't see the light
So hold that to your mind and think of me
I'm ride 'till the day I die
a savage is what I am,
the gang life what I live
So growin up on these streets was so hard on me
that I couldn't see the end of me
my life is crazy so don't mistake me for a punk

-S

From The Beat: Everyone goes crazy sometimes, when the world seems to swirl around and nothing makes sense. And people may not understand it, but it's real. But there is an end to it. Sometimes if you just take a step back, and think about things, it'll make more sense, and maybe you'll be a little better off.

Messed Up

You guys are messed up because you guys told me I was bull. Oh yea - what about you guys? I bet you won't put this in The Beat. I'M SMART. The End.

-Jazmin

From The Beat: Hey, we do make mistakes, but are you sure we made one with you. We don't doubt that you're smart. But being smart can get you in a heap of trouble if you don't use your brains for good things. What did you say that caused us to make the comment that obviously hurt your feelings? Talk with us about it when we meet again.

Going For The Jewels

If my house was on fire and I can save one thing it would be my mom's jewelry box. Because I know she keeps a lot of things that are important to her besides jewelry like pictures of my dad before he passed away and all our important documents.

-Chucky

From The Beat: That jewelry box sounds like something important in every sense. You seem to have your priorities right.

This Road

I hate going down this road and not knowing where it's going to end.

I can't even think without remembering my boyfriend.

Being in here makes me stop and realize
all the things in my life that I have jeopardized.

Why can't my life be normal?

I'm just sitting in here having to be formal.

God, please send me to Heaven already because I'm
living a life of hell.

Been in here so long startin' to look pale.

People say life is a game - the way you live is the way
you play -

just like playing a life of poker. Get the wrong card and
your life is over.

-Salinas

From The Beat: Forget those cards. They limit you. Life is complicated. Yes, there's an element of chance. But much depends on the conscious choices you make. Don't be a cop-out. Don't blame fate for situations you could have avoided. Start today to create a vision of the life you'd like to live. To use your own metaphor, choose a road that will lead you to the destination you want to reach. And never forget that the trip itself IS your life, as you live it, day by day.

The Item and Persons I Would Save

Whatt up Beat, it's your boy up in here writing from the. Well the topic today is about what would I save from a burning house. The thing that I would save from a burning house would be my birth certificate because I would really need that paper. The other thing that I would save from a burning house would be my family because I really have feelings for them and I love them. My little niece would be the first one out because she is only one year old and she has more years to go.

Well Beat stay up and I will see you next time, late.

-Pee-wee

From The Beat: It sounds like your priorities are in the right place. We wish you and your family all the best, and hope you will stay with them as much as you can.

Good News

Well Beat, today I got new good news. The first is that my sentence WAS the ranch and now I'm looking at four months life skills. I just have to wait for my next court date, so now I'll be getting out earlier than I was even planning on.

Second, I just found out that my sister is one month pregnant, and now I'm excited for her. Anyways - I'm excited for my sister and I hope for the best for her. I also hope to get out soon so I can stay by my sister's side through her pregnancy.

-Tatiana

From The Beat: And we hope so, too. Spend those four months wisely T.

Growing Up

I believe it does take a squad to raise a child, because the hood has a major impact on your seed. I know mine does. If I wasn't raised in the hood and exposed to outlaws, then I would be good. It took me a while to finally get it right, and make the right choices, because I don't have too many chances in this boosie county.

When I get out I'm skatin' back to my county. But yea, I'm glad that my whole case is over because I've been sitting in here for dumb long - doin' dead time. So, I got court next week, and hopefully in four months I could finally touchdown - home. Well, 'til next week Beat, I'm out.

-Shatweezie

From The Beat: So now you know. You've had to learn it 'the hard way', but you've learned it - we hope. Use that lovely brain of yours wisely.

The Begging of my Suffering

When I die I would be grateful if you put on my tomb two bottles of Mezcal.

Because I know I'm going to die over a hangover And you know it's your fault because I can't forget you.

Every night when I hit the bottle I see you inside of it And I start to speak to you

In a while I feel that you're hugging me tight as Though it was true I love you I love you and it's not true

When I get sober off my crazy thoughts it's the Beginning of my suffering because I look for you and You're not there

From my eyes I shed tears because I love you So much I can't help

-Crazy

From the Beat: Grief is the hardest process a person can ever go through. It's unbearable for a while, and never fully goes away. But it gets better, so long as you try to face it rather than drowning it. All that fear, all that pain, becomes a part of you, and you can accept it. Good luck.

When Things Go Wrong

What's up Beat? I hate being in here. I can't even drink a beer. I refuse to lose, beg, and pick and choose. When my mom comes to visit me I hate saying goodbye. But as the days go by I confide, and decide I don't want to be here any longer. But my heart grows stronger. So now I wait for the day I will walk out of the gate, hopefully, with no more hate. Well, to - stay up. THINGS GO WRONG BUT LIFE GOES ON!

-Becky

From The Beat: Your last line is true, true, true. Some say that the real measure of us is how we deal with life when things do go wrong. What do you think?

What I Think

Well what's up Beat? I am very disappointed because we did not receive The Beat this week but hopefully we will get them next week. Well my time is almost coming for me to get out.

I pray to God to forgive me for my sins and pray that everything goes well. I have a job planned out to work with my Step-Dad. From 5:30 AM to 7:00 PM. So I'm gonna be busy all day so that's good.

Well the unit is doing good for right now. Of course you never know what happens. Well I ran out of words. So with this I am out till pencil meets paper, alratos.

-G

From The Beat: You seem to have a good plan for the future. Good luck on the outs, and good luck with your faith.

Thanks Beat!

Thank you to all Beat staff for being here for the whole Santa Clara County. Well I'm going to be getting out soon, thanks for letting me express my feelings on paper, I will miss you all... And to Morgan the staff thanks for all the help. Bye.

-Lil' Tim

From The Beat: We appreciate the thanks, and we wish you all the best. We have faith you'll make it good.

Waiting

What's good with my peeps and The Beat? Me, I'm just waiting. Well I'm not feeling these topics so I am gonna get on with my own.

I'm waiting to get sentenced.

I'm waiting to do my time and get out.

I'm waiting to reunite with my family.

I'm waiting to get back with the squad.

I'm waiting to get out and be with my girl.

All this waiting I'm doing ain't cool, but I'll tell you one thing -

I did the crime so I'm gonna do the time.

I'm out.

-Sephina

From The Beat: While you're doing all that waiting, why not begin to prepare for the life you really want to life. We've known you long enough to have discovered that you are a very bright human being. But even the brightest of us have to have our priorities straight, and have to use our talents on what's really important. For instance - what's really more important - getting "back with the squad", or getting ready to further your education. There are dozens of questions we could ask, but you're plenty bright enough to ask them on your own. Use your gifts Sephina. You have a fine mind and a good heart. Set your sights high.

Mad

What's up Beat, well today we could write about anything. Today I am writing about JH, this place that is dirty and don't have respect for us minors.

For once in my life I want to get noticed and respected by some of these staff. Well some of these people or counselors are all cool, not all, put some people down in here but they lock us kids in here. I am mad at these places or prisons that how they make their money. I wish I never get locked up again.

-Tim

From The Beat: We know things seem harsh sometimes, and not everyone is perfect, but it is usually intended to help, even if the communication isn't so great. It's good that you can let out the frustration, and can say what you mean.

Right To Learn

When I went to regular high school that stuff was hella boosie. Classes were two hours each. Nobody wants to sit listen to a whole bunch of non-sense for that long. Regular high school is good only if you wanna be social.

If they cut back on 5 billion dollars from regular school, it shouldn't phase them because ain't nobody going to learn anyways. But if it's community school, then that's a whole different story, because what more could they take from there?

-Nessa

From The Beat: Yes Nessa, community schools would feel the cuts too. And by the way, we don't buy that business about not being able to learn anything in high school. You get out of an experience what you're willing to put into it. You obviously didn't put much into it. Maybe there were good reasons why you didn't. Maybe not. But it sounds to us as if you aren't yet willing to take your fair share of the responsibility for what went wrong. Not much will change until you do.

I Watch The Moon

I'm sorry for the pain que te di (I caused you)
 Cosas que no debían haber sido así (Things that were
 not supposed to be like that)
 Coming home 'til like, two or three
 I was drinking and doing drugs like a foo'
 All the shhh I made you go through
 Now I'm locked up and you're out there
 I guess life just isn't fair
 Now I'm paying my consequences
 Doing time 'til the day of Mexican Independence
 I guess God gave me another chance
 I could have got sent away
 Thank God I'm not, so I pray every day
 From my window, I look out and watch the moon
 Jefita, I can't want to come home
 I'll be home soon
 Jefita, te quiero

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: You've written a beautiful poem to your mother. It may really help her to know you're thinking about how your messing up affects her, and maybe she can stop worrying and grieving that you're in juvy and not home.

I Cannot Trust You

You've once asked me if I would ever take you serious
 How do you expect me to answer, when you make me so
 furious?
 In my mind my answer is a "no," so I cannot say "yes"
 Every time you tell me something, you look me in the eye
 But I still can't tell if you're telling me the truth
 Or just another lie
 Why can't you be honest with me?
 I just don't know why
 You tell me that you trust me, but I cannot trust you
 At least not yet, until I figure out if you're true
 Sometimes I wonder if you're just a fake
 Maybe getting to know you was just a mistake
 But when I first saw you, I took another glance
 Baby, you let me know if you really want to give it a real chance

-Shy Boy

From The Beat: It is often hard to get to know if someone's playing you or not. Is this young lady doing something specific you suspect is phony, or do you doubt the sincerity of ladies in general? All you can really do is hang with her and watch her. Regardless of what she says about herself, slowly she'll reveal who she is.

My Dream

Going 'round the world is my dream
 Showing off this bling
 I'm not gon' stop
 You know it
 Be you know I go so heard
 Drop ten, then eighteen bars
 All gas, no brakes
 Got stashes of yay
 You do not want to fight
 Because I'm all in the paint
 My dream is that my rap group go pro
 All gas, no brakes
 Peace, Beat
 We don't say "yeah", we say "yee"

-Lil' Hus

From The Beat: Okay, we've read about your dreams, but what do you have to teach anyone who reads this? Next week, why don't you concentrate on writing a poem about your rap group? Do you write raps yourself? Do you have any serious raps that come out of your experiences? That we'd love to hear/read/learn about.

My Uncle's Silent About The Salvadorean Civil War

My mother told me her brother, my uncle, was in the (civil) war (in El Salvador, where our family is from.) He ran away because he was scared of dying. He was in the (Salvadorean) military/paramilitary, the death squads, but I never asked him (about it.) We just made fun of him because he was scared and ran away.

My uncle was here (in the US) for a couple years. He paid for the coyote (someone who smuggles people across the Mexican/US border into the US.) He went back to Salvador because he didn't like it here (in the US) that much—it was too expensive. He couldn't find that many jobs. He now works on the farms, growing crops, raising his family. It's peaceful, but there's parts that are rough in Ahuajapan (the province of El Salvador where he lives.) It's poor. I'm gonna go visit him when I turn eighteen.

-Iosepi

From The Beat: Have you learned any more about the civil war in El Salvador, from 1980-1992, during which 75,000 were killed, from anyone else or from reading histories about Salvador? Sometimes the death squads disappeared all the young men from entire towns, and their families often found their bodies in the "Valley of the Dogs" a dry riverbed running along San Salvador, El Salvador's capital, or they never saw their sons/brothers again. Why don't you listen to people who survived all sides of the civil war? Maybe you'd develop some real respect for your uncle who may have left his unit because he was afraid or maybe because he couldn't stand the duties the death squads demanded of him.

Dumb One

Man, we go so hard
 Drop eighteen bars
 Going dumb on cars
 So I am so dumb
 Get kicked out the club
 Even though I'm not old enough
 You know what it is
 We gone thizz
 Pop my collar
 Then spit at this one girl
 Do the drop
 'Cause I'm doin' the for real
 Get back up
 Get to the counter
 So I can fill my cup
 These drugs taking over
 It ain't my fault
 Go so hard, go harder
 Than a block
 To all
 Stay up
 Peace out

-Lil' Hus

From The Beat: This thizz/hyphy rap may be what's in your imagination, but what's really going on in your heart? If, as you write, drugs are really taking you over, what are they doing to your mind/body? What is your life really like? How can anyone get to know you beyond your hyphy self?

I Was So On Last Night!

Stunnas on no lenses
 Eyes bigger than half dollars
 Yee! I go.
 I'm still on. Yee.

-Dame

From The Beat: Are you still "on"? What are you like when you're "off"? Who are you under the hyphy persona you present?

The Best

This person is the best
Even when he's at rest
He takes care of me
But why can't my PO see?
That he's not a bad person
That every situation will never worsen
This person is my street dad
We both know he ain't bad
This is for you daddy
I know you be ridin' in your caddy
I can't wait to get out and see you there's no doubt
You tell me not to be blazin'
'Cause I'm your baby J'son
I'll listen to you 'cause you ain't no fool

- Shenee

From the Beat: If this person you call dad means so much to you then you should take his advice, and not be "blazin'" all that will do is keep you jail and away from your dad.

Grief

It's early yet the month is one
Although you can't see me I've just begun
I'm a little seed growing inside of you
It's early yet the month is two
Even through you can't see me I'm apart of you
Wait and see mommy will be so very proud of me
It's early yet the month is five
Mommy killed me
I'm no longer alive, abortion
Is its name taking a life before it's alive?
We'll time has been passing
I would have been born right on time
Even thought I'm in heaven I must cry
Because of mommy I had to DIE.

-Baby Bashful

From The Beat: The choice of abortion is not one that any one person should have, to make. However, This is a choice a person will have to live with for the rest of their life. Remember there are people you can talk to about things like this, don't let this build up inside before it is too late. Reach out a hand for help and advise.

Grief

Me as I have lived my life living life as a thug
I have grieved three different people all family.
I will recover some, but as I lost my sister Kiara in
Hurricane Katrina
who was only four years old
now that is not right at all.
Next my great grandmother Dorothy
who had a heart attack
she helped me and my mom when we were struggling.
Then my stepbrother Chris died,
he killed himself, and he didn't have his mind right at
the time.
But living life
my life as a thug
it is hell.
This is what my family and I have to remember.
RIP Kiara, RIP Dorohy, RIP big brother

-Lil' Toes

From The Beat: Your life is not easy. When we met you, you informed us of your troubles, we do hope life has settled down some. Best to you in making good choices as you work towards staying out of the system for good.

What Is An Older Brother?

Somebody who's there when you need to listen when you want, to get something of your chest, or some one who's there to give you a hand when you find yourself in a bad situation. Or is it just somebody who you can have fun, and relax with?

Maybe that's what an older brother is but me...me; I'm none of those things. I get mad. I get violent. All the things in me that could make me a potential role model, a smile on my face every now and then could help, but when I smile at my moms last child. I can see the fear in his eyes, and for me my older brother was so great at doing what I can't. I want to do for my lil' bro what my older brother did for me.

But when my mom asked me "Why aren't you like Sam." I begin to crush under the pressure, but maybe one day when I'm not in any kind of a locked down facility I'll be what my older brother was for me to my lil' bro.

-Anthony, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: With time you will be just that a 'role model' for not just your little bro, but for any young person that looks up to you. Get the help you need for your anger now, so you can be the role model you want to be.

My Sadness, My Loss

I have this beef
From my grief
For you grandpa I cried
When I heard you died
For the fool who killed you
I wish there was something I could do
The law said, "let us handle it"
But I said no that's bull
After I felt like dying
Then grab my nine
Wishing I could find the fool
So I could put his in a blood pool
Before the fool got popped, I stopped
Then just dripped to my knees
Begged God please to bring me back to you
Then I thought of what you'd say, so to this day I pray
For you I still cry each and everyday,
Wishing you'd come back today
Like they say, "what comes around goes back around"
For the fool who killed you
I pray that he'll get his payback too
I love you grandpa

- Shenee, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Many people believe that, "What goes around comes around" but you must remember one thing your grandfather's words of wisdom. Use his wisdom to better your life not destroy it; he wanted you to have a long happy life prove this can happen.

Troubles

Troubles leaving the front door
With this crap on my ankle
Trouble with my mom
I can't even talk with out her getting pissed
Trouble with life
Where should I be at?
Trouble spiritually'
What should I believe?
Maybe next time around there won't be any trouble
Maybe everything will just chill out?
Till then.....

-Tyler

From The Beat: Not to bear you with bad news, but life gets so much harder as we get older. Bottom-line, more responsibilities! Good luck!

Lo Que Ha Sido De Mí

Q ondas raza Catracha. Mi nombre e s Ernesto. Les quiero contar algo de mi vida. Antes de todo les mando saludes a todos.

Yo llegue a los Estados Unidos cuando tenía 16 años y ahorita tengo 17 años. Todo ese tiempo, me la he pasado trabajando de llantero, o sea reparando llantas de carro. Me ha ido bien mal, pero le doy gracias a Dios porque fue el oficio que aprendo aunque pagaban muy poco. Por esa razón fue que tome la decision de ir a la calle a vender drogas. Les quiero dar un consejo, que si les salen oportunidades que no las desaprovechen y si pueden trabajar legar, haganlo.

Esta es el dibujo de la mariguana, si tienen este vicio dejenlo porque es malo para su salud. Todo tipo de droga es dañina.

Andar en la calle no es bueno porque es muy peligroso y demasiado arriesgado. A los que quieran vender drogas, cuidensen. Se que nosotros los hacemos por necesidad. Les deseo suerte.

From The Beat: No hay cosa tan bella que sentirse orgulloso al ganar el dinero trabajando legarmente y honradamente. Cualquier penny que venga de cualquier tipo de trabajo honrado es un dinero bendecido. Nos alegra que te hayas dado cuenta del daño que causan las droga y la venta de droga. Al vender no solo estas matando gente, sino que destruyendote tu propia vida y perdiendo tu libertad. Siempre recuerda que el dinero mal habido, mal habido se va. Esperamos que esos pensamientos positivos se queden en ti siempre.

What I Gone Through

What's up my Honduran people. My name is Ernesto. I want to share something about my life. Before all, I want to send my greetings to all.

I came to The US, when I had 16 years old and now I am 17. All this time, I've been my time working in a tire shop, fixing tires. Things have gone bad for me, but I still thank God because that's the career I learned to do even though I was getting paid very little

. That's the reason I decided to sell drugs on the streets. I want to give you an advice, if you get opportunities in life, don't miss them and if you can work legally, do it.

If you have the bad habit of smocking marijuana, quit it because it's really bad for your health. All type of drugs is bad.

To be on the streets is dangerous and very risky. To those who want to sell drugs, take care. I know we do it because have needs. I wish you good luck.

-Catracho, San Francisco

From The Beat: There isn't such as thing that feeling proud by gaining money legally and honesty. Every single penny that comes from hard working and legal is blessed. We are happy to know that you found out that harm drugs does to people. By selling you're not just killing people, but also destroying your life and giving away your freedom. Always remember that easy money comes and easy goes. We hope you keep your positive thoughts always active.



En Mi Camino

Hola yo me vine de Honduras con unos amigos que nos llebábamos muy bien desde que teníamos 5 años.

Cuando ellos me dijeron qu si me venía con ellos, yo les pude decir que no. No me arripieto de tomar esa decisión. Cuando veníamos, mi amigo no se pudo subir al tren porque era su primera vez. Se aguito y se puso a gritar que me tirara del tren para que me quedara haciendole compañía. El tren iba muy recio, pero me daba pesar dejarlo solo. Entonces me tire del tren y casi me quiebro los pieces. Estuve en casa de una señora quien me dio quebrada porque me había lastimado el piez de la cahída que me di. Me dolían mucho y no podia seguir en el camion con un piez medio quebrada. Le doy gracias a Dios que llegue a los Estados Unidos con mis amigos.

From The Beat: Hicistes lo correcto en haberte quedado con el. Esto demuestra el tipo de amigo que eres. ¿Que te paso? ¿Por qué estas aqui sabiendo que te salistes de tu pais para una vida mejor? ¿Es este lugar la razón por la cual venistes? Tienes que empezar a estimar las cosas que son difícil de obtener como estar en este pais y la libertad.

On The Road

Hi, I came here with some friends who I've known since I was 5 years old. When they told me that they were coming, I couldn't say no. I don't regret taking that decision.

When we were coming, my friend couldn't get into the train because it was his first time. He gave up and asked me to jump off the train so I can be his companion. The train was going fast, so I jumped off and I almost break my feet. I spend a few days in a lady's house because I hurt my feet from the accident. It hurt me so much and I couldn't continue with my journey with a feet almost broken. I thank God I came to the US with my friends.

-Ernesto San Francisco

From The Beat: You did the right thing in staying with him. This shows the type of friend you are. But, what happened? Why are you here after leaving your country for a better future? Is this place the reason why you came? You need to start appreciating the things that are hard to get like the privilege of being in this country and freedom.



Milleniul Hip Hop: "Ghettoism", our generation?

Part 7: Hip-Hop

The issue of Hip-Hop are rap, which I will just generalize as Hip-Hop, is a major concern, I believe, for our generation. The power it wields is impressive.

Hip-Hop radiates from speakers in all walks of life. The people who listen to Hip-Hop hears the words and gain understanding to lives outside of theirs. They feel the struggles being portrayed on tape. Hip-Hop has the power to entrance people and take them on a journey to places they've never been. The influence to be gained by Hip-Hop can radiate further than any advertisement campaigning equipment imaginable. It has the power to reach all walks of life and portray the realities unknown to the majority of the population,

Hip-Hop also has the power to influence choices, to change lives and to create new social movements whether they are positive or negative. Just look at the "hyphy" movement which radiated out of a couple small city neighborhoods. Needless to say, the power behind Hip-Hop is very influential and widely accepted.

The image that a lot of Hip-Hop music portrays is not a positive image. So, with its powerful life influencing possibilities, is this the type of image we want entering the nation's sound waves? The songs glorify block livin', gang bangin', thuggin', hustlin', and everything else that comes from the street. Yes, these are the sad realities of people across the nation and Hip-Hop is a way to show our struggles, but if music it is done in a glorifying manner it will only lead to more glorification.

The power of influence or suggestion can transform lives. If all we hear about is drug dealin' and hood livin' these life-altering attributes will start getting played out by listeners. This is a problem when people take the lyrics and try to act them out in life. I am not saying we should stop explaining the situation of the street, but I believe we should show our struggle in an un-glorified way and offer solutions to our problems instead of more crime.

Our tapes are heard by more than just us, The "ghetto" generationers and Hip-Hop listeners. If our music does not better its image it is portraying, it will continue to lose the influence it has in society, like what is currently happening. Less people are listening to Hip-Hop in general because of the repetitive themes being played on the records. For too long have we been hearing about "icy don figas" and so much cash that they can throw it around. The music is losing it's meaning quickly by addressing nothing but the vain pleasures of money. What happened to the earlier messages of Dre, Snoop, DMX, 50 cent, Eminem?

I'm not saying these are all positive messages, but they at least held the truth out for people and gave them something that was real in the community. Tupac and Biggie Smalls were notorious for the way they could address issues of the day with their lyrical abilities. They let the mass media hear it. These two would spit rhymes about the blocks, jobs or lack of job opportunities, the realities of people just getting out of prison, teen pregnancy, drugs and the effect they had on society. They were not afraid to address problems. It was not always done in a positive way, but even with the negatives they portrayed they proved enough to become the voices of a generation split between East and West.

With the Hip-Hop industry today a lot of people with messages are not being heard, because of either lack of popularity due to the "hype" or for the simply fact that many morally just Hip-Hop fans are not standing up and supporting them. "Common" and "KRS-one" are just two rappers in a whole movement of rappers trying to save Hip-Hop. "Chamillionare" just released his last album without cursing. We do have artists who are trying to change and positively influence Hip-Hop. But, these people are not being

Our first writer we got for y'all is writing to us from Solano County Jail in Fairfield, Ca. Tyler is a great writer that comes with some very potent material for y'all to inhale. He's talking about the young generation and the future of America. Tyler is preaching about Hip Hop and how most rappers are just talking about money but aren't talking about the issues that the people face in the community every day, just like 2pac and Biggie used to do. So peep this article out and soak up some knowledge.

heard as much as the glorified cash hungry rappers that flood the airwaves and top charts. If we could get the voice of a few artist who want to use the influential power of Hip-Hop for good to the top of the charts the rap industry could change. It will let society know we are people with struggles, not just lost souls floundering around in money with drugs.

Our struggles need to be heard. Hip-Hop produces an opportunity for us to voice ourselves in a style we have adapted to generate support for all of us. Hip-Hop can and will make a positive turn if we continue to approach it in a positive manner to show our true selves and not just continue to use it to portray our debauchery and degrading lifestyle.

Hip-Hop is the way for our people to easily penetrate places we normally would not be able to. Politicians are people with children. I'd bet some of them listen to Hip-Hip and that would mean the parents, politicians, will hear the voice of the artists. This being just one possible example of how our music can reach out to all people.

Now, if we as a whole would come together and hold Hip-Hop accountable for the image it is projecting we can influence a change. Hip -Hop is basically the face of our generation. People hear it and think the words in the song describes its listeners, or summarizes the general attitude and way of living for those who are embracing it's culture. So, with this negative image of Hip-Hop combined with the negative social image some of us portray, it continues to make our culture more of a burden than a blessing. Thus making our struggle to be heard harder than it already is.

Hip - Hop holds the key to opening a major door for change in our generation. If used correctly it can help influence it's listeners to pursue careers, socially acceptable living, change peoples direction away from crime. Yet, we can still use it to show the realities of the gang and street life, to show the all consuming power of drugs, relay the problems centering around sexual relationships, voice the lack of opportunities for personal advancement and give possible solutions to these problems. This will prove we are not just reveling in our horrible situation.

Hip-Hop can bring conscience awareness to our issues and this will help shine truthful light on our situation. Hip-Hop must change its direction for the potential that lies within Hip-Hop is far to valuable to be wasted. Like Tupac said " still I see no changes"

MILLENIUL HIP-HOP: "GHETTOISM",OUR GENERATION?

PART 8: CONCLUSION

Herein lies the potential of our generation. I believe with the tools we have available we can unite to create a powerful change. But, like I have been emphasizing throughout these papers our image, our demeanor, our way of life must change. For like Emerson said "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I can't hear what you say".

We must start with changing ourselves before our communities, states and nation. William George Jordan said, " Into the hands of every individual is given a marvelous power for good or evil- the silent unconscious unseen influence of his life. This is simply the constant radiation of what man really is, not what he pretends to be." So before we can gain power for our generation we must change ourselves for the better. We are all actors in this play.

This does not mean necessarily that we must change our

continued from previous page

culture, but it does mean embracing the positive side and shunning the negative. "No one can persuade another to change. Each of us guards a gate of change that can only be opened from the inside. We can not open the gate of another either by argument or by emotional appeal," Marilyn Ferguson.

We will always have the struggle of the street. With this knowledge we must help bring attention to the street struggle. We can portray the realities properly to people in order to get the proper facilities or programs to help improve the struggle we endure living in the harsh world. People can not read our minds. We must voice ourselves openly and properly to be heard. We have the outlets to make a voice if we just utilize them properly. Hip-Hop, a common culture, common struggles, the potential for no race within our grasp to use and make our generation heard.

What we've been through, what we know and who we are can bring solutions to some of the nations biggest problems. Murder, drugs, sex, gangs, robbery, rape. This is what all too many of us know. We have experience in our generation's struggles. Many of us are stuck in the struggles not seeing a way out or escape route any time soon. But, this can all turn out for the good if we just utilize what we know to influence a change. We can have a voice people in learning about who we are. For those who aren't numbers, we can help them avoid becoming one by teaching them, they are our voice.

If we change the negative image of our generation people will listen. We must not be afraid of this challenge. "No man should judge unless he asks himself in absolute honesty, whether in a similar situation he might not have done the same... we had to learn ourselves, furthermore we had to teach despairing men, that it did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us... for what then matters is to bear witness to the uniquely human potential at it's best, which is to transform personal tragedy into a triumph, to turn one's predicament into a human achievement...(Dr. Viktor Frankl) "Man's search for meaning. We can achieve a change for our generation. We must not give up on the betterment of our people and future generations."

This "ghetto" culture can bring unique unity to those who embrace this lifestyle. We can use it to our advantage if we can see past our differences along with the destructive "hype" that comes along with the "ghetto" nation and look at the realities that can accompany this cultural movement. If we do not do it for us, then we should at least do it for those who might possibly follow in our footsteps and the next generation to come along which will consist of our kids.

We can bring change, we do not have to let our environments control us and let what society labels us as stop us from changing those environments and the ingrained views of society. "Never feel shame for trying and failing. For he who has never failed is he who has never tried...let us act now even though our actions may not bring happiness or success, for it is better to act and fail than not to act and flounder. "Ogmandino.

With all this said the potential we hold, as a united culture with common goals and lifestyles, is the key to our future success in my opinion. There is a lot I did not cover in these brief papers, but I believe I got my point across. We must use our "ghetto" culture to unite us as a whole. We must embrace the positive side to the "ghetto" movement and try to change the negative. Knowing who we are and where we're from will help us to work a change. We must further the work of passed generations and overlook socio-economical standings, race and sex boundaries and consider everyone as equals. We must get active in politics to help save our culture. We can bring about change for the street with the knowledge we have. Knowing we can not eradicate completely all of the crime, drug and prison problems we can help them improve by giving more options to those who want a way out to find one. Lastly, We must use the power of hip-hop to our advantage. No one can stop the potential within our culture as I perceive it. But, then again these are just my thoughts, opinions and views. What they amount to is up to you.

"Each generation out of relative obscurity, must discover their mission, fulfill it or betray it." Anonymous

TWREX
 Romans 8:28

ERIC GONZALES

Our next writer is writing to us from Dade Correctional Institution in Florida City, Fl. Eric is a wonderful storyteller and doesn't leave out any details. The upcoming piece is a personal story that Eric would love to share with y'all. Enjoy!

"The Train"

My big brother and I grew up riding the Metro Rail; some people call it the train, watching the city of Miami pass by without a cent to our name. From our apartment porch on 11 St and 3rd Ave, I saw little kids with ringworms, "Florida Sores" and dirty diapers hanging down, heavy with urine and feces - some tore and fell to the ground.

And that butt-naked baby is still walking around. Now he's looking for dirt. Doesn't the truth hurt? He sits down and does what all kids do when they don't have toys: He/they use the ground as a plate when they bake a dirt cake and get mud in their eyes while they make mud pies.

This homemade playground is heaven on earth to small children whose sandlot is the same color as the dark, and this is their public park. Some of the most successful of their parents have been brought to their lowest by the stranglehold of a monster named crack cocaine. I've seen the feet swollen and cracked around the heels of those whose bodies and minds have been arrested by the craving and the search for the next hit. They strive - to stay high; and will walk through hell with gasoline drawe's on to keep their lighters lit.

The scene at the corner store consists of the following:

former bus-drivers, tap dancers, and schoolteachers. (One of which was my substitute teacher who maintained his job and his life of getting high and spending a few dollars on prostitutes); how winos and crack addicts, all party together and on Friday and Saturday nights, turning the side of the store into a make shift nightclub. The "drunk and high" come and go at random, each chanting their anthem. There's no sleep on these streets, because they're flooded with phantoms.

This are, (overtown) formerly nicknamed "Baby Harlem" by the stars, used to be loaded, used to be loaded with motels, clubs, restaurants, and such in the 50's, 60's and early 70's era; before crack came and you can see everything I saw when you ride by on the train... forgive me y'all for such dark writing, but my heart can't hide what it sees. There are two America's: the one you see on those superficial urban YMCA commercials, and the one down the street from it; the one I grew up in. Besides, it's easier to write from experience than imagination. Peace, love, and more love.

Real Talk

In a world where evil lurks on every street corner and peace without oneself is a hard thing to come by, we must travel beyond mere existence and live our lives to the fullest, the best we can. Things have been so hard for a race of misused and rejected people that are African American, really with all race today people are still suffering. The streets can make you and the streets can break you.

To those caught in the trap of temporary pleasures, let me tell you this: The root of all evil, which is the love of money and the next man's pain, will surely come back to haunt you. We have a choice. I believe everyone has a heart, and within our hearts is a conscious. And I know the inner peace we are lacking in ourselves can be found.

I know all the burdens we carry can be lifted. I also know our perseverance, our will to survive. Love yourself and love thy neighbor. Give yourself time to grow and open your minds to education because it is a key to the way out. Whatever you do, make it worth something. All your consequences in life are dependent upon your behavior. If you know what the consequences are, why do you still exhibit detrimental behavior?

To prove something? Or you just staying true to the game?

Be Determined!

One must have self-determination, to reach all or most of your goals. There will be many, many complications along your way, but don't let those complications be the excuse that made you fold. If we always rely on others to hold us up,

We will never learn to stand on your own. A child can learn this trait, and that same bad habit until carry on when he's or she's grown. Besides yourself, there's so many others that will always try to keep you down. But if you keep your mind and eye's on the bigger pictures, eventually your goods and destination will be found.

Yeah, haters are going to keep on hating regardless of how you live. So ignore them and their words and stares, because you are doing you and they have nothing to give. Embrace all of your hearts, pains and hardships, because they will only make you wiser and stronger. If not, you will be a part of the many, many, many who's dreams will last no longer.



Our next writer is writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. John aka Kutty opens up his piece with some real talk. He's not trying to preach to anybody but you can recognize real talk when somebody is talking. He's offering some advice and it's there for anyone to take it.

I have learned that when I am angry, I have the right to be angry but that don't mean that I have to take it out on people.

What I Have Learned

It's easy for us to write people off once they have made some significant mistakes. We find it easier to punish people than to forgive them, easier to throw them away, than to restore them. I have learned that you can't make someone love you, all you can do is be someone that can be loved! The rest is up to them.

I have learned that no matter how much I care some people won't care back. I have learned that it takes years to build up trust, but only seconds to destroy it! I have learned that it is not what-you-have-in-your-life, but whom-you-have-in-your-life! I have learned that you shouldn't not compare yourself to the best that others can do, but by the best that you can do!

I have learned that it is not what happens to people, it is what they do about it. I have learned that you should always have loved one's with loving words, because it might be the last time you see them. I have learned that heroes are people who does what has to get done, regardless of the consequences. I have learned that there are people who love you dearly; they just don't know how to show it!

I have learned that when I am angry, I have the right to be angry but that don't mean that I have to take it out on people. I have learned that true friendship continues to grow, even over the longest distance!

I have learned that no matter how good a friend is, they are going to hurt you every once awhile, and you must forgive them for that. I have learned that just because two people argue, it don't mean they do not have on another! And just because they don't argue, don't mean they do! I have learned that you have to put the individual ahead of their actions!

I have learned that no matter the consequences, those who are honest with themselves get farther in life! I have learned that life can change in a matter of hours, by people that don't know you. I learned when you think you have no more to give, when a friend cries out to you, you will find strength from God to help!

I learned that writing as well as talking, can ease emotional pain. I have learned that the people you care most about in life are taken from you too soon! I've learned that it is hard to determine where to draw the line between being nice, and not hurting peoples feelings, and standing up for what you believe. I have learned that no matter how thin you slice it, there are always two sides.

Learning The Right Way

And while being incarcerated for almost 20 years, I had to learn the hard way and the right way, so I could give myself a chance. Because this was something I have never done, giving myself a chance. Because I always made things harder for myself then they had to be.

Instead of doing time I was letting time do me and there was a lot I had to learn because I was making my timework against me. When I could have been making my timework for me. So I went giving myself a chance, by struggling to change my situation, for the better because for years I was driving myself up a wall.

Our next writer is writing from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Fla. Michael has always brought some insightful writing for everybody to read. Read his pieces and you might learn something about yourselves.

Being Reliable

Being reliable is something we all need to learn to be, because here in prison there are not many people I can count on as being a reliable source. We need someone in our corner who we can count on. Someone I can trust and that's hard to find here in Florida prison system. The world just needs more reliable people in it. Now days, we are living up under new wave system, along with the new wave mindset and don't know what being reliable mean.

They have many faces. They fake many moves. They are not real with themselves or anyone else. They are into misleading you to think they are reliable, and that they is all good. When they intentions is all bad. Many of them cannot be counted on for nothing. It's hard living around so many unreliable people and they are being taught everything. But how to be reliable because people need someone they can depend on, they need more reliable leaders in prison and in the world.

I as myself and we as the people need reliable sources. When I was growing up it was not hard to find reliable people they was everywhere and being reliable is something special, so let someone be able to count on you as a reliable source.

The Beat Within

I Must Free Myself

I must free myself, from the way I think, because I am locked up in the mind and I am the only one who has the keys to my freedom because true freedom starts in the mind and the soul. This is what has control. So I must seek the truth to free myself. I need to take the chains off my mind. So I can stop running with the blind. The white man is no longer the one to blame, for the chains we are keeping on our mind because true freedom comes within and most people think, being released from behind these prison gates make them a free person, which it don't.

The way they think is what keeps them incarcerated in the minds because for a long time I was not free when I was in the so call free world because I did not know what true freedom was. I did not know myself. I did not follow my own mind. I was a follower and I did not have much to think with. I stayed going in and out of jail. I spent most of my young life in prison. No matter if I was in prison are on the streets I was not free. As the years went flying by and I went to getting up in age, and my will went to growing stronger for me to free myself. So I could humble myself, and stop living a life of self-destruction.

Doing Evil Leads to Greater Evil

I do have some evil ways about myself, that I have picked up in this world and I struggle very hard to change them ways because doing evil only leads to greater evil and I learned the hard way about doing evil to others, it only comes back in a greater way. The more I did evil the more them evil forces came at me and every which way turned evil was there.

This world is full of evil doing, form stealing, killing, robbing, cheating, hating, turning on each for worldly things. This is not the way things should be, and I like reading the bible because it is full of knowledge and wisdom that tells you all about evil doing and the more true insight I get on evil doing, makes me want to turn away from evil doing. When I did some that was evil even greater evil would come back on me. So no one can do evil things, and get away with it because doing evil only lead to greater evil.

Being Friendly

I am somewhat friendly guy. I don't see anything wrong with being friendly. Right here in prison most people think being friendly is a weakness and most inmates look down on people who are friendly cause there has been a lot of times where I would here dude right here in prison say to other inmates that they are mot friendly. In close management lock down this is a saying I hear all the time. I am not friendly. I am a very low-key kind of person. By most I am considered to be a friendly person because I want to get along with everybody. Being friendly is being wise and smart and not making my time hard. Friendly people are the ones who has good hearts and they make doing time around them easy.

No Better Than Slavery

If it is true that the progress of a society must be measured not simply by the best of us, but also by the worst of us, then why can be said about certain people and about some of the horrible things they do? Take for instance the following story.

Her name shall remain anonymous. But what she has done — though none but she and God were witnesses to her deed — will remain as fresh and as ugly as the first day it was discovered. In an alley, she recounts how her water broke... how she staggered over to the side of the street among the garbage cans and trash bags... how there, in the midst of rats and filth she brought forth a blameless little body and cut the umbilical cord, perhaps with her teeth, and left her little one in the gutter to die.

Was she black? The woman who did this reprehensible thing against God and humanity? Does it matter? Perhaps it does not matter to say that the woman who had her child just inches away from a dumpster was black. But she was black. Not only was she black, but being so, she was all at once, the sum-total of all that was fought for and died for during a war that was waged to grant humanity to people who had been raped of the right to call themselves human. And here, one of their offspring had just dropped a baby like a cat guts kittens.

Indeed, we human beings are too complex a people. Consequently, no one can speak for everyone. Nevertheless, when we see our own wallowing in the filth and confusion that so many lives have been sacrificed to overcome, it pains us. We want to go outside, roll up our sleeves and become better keepers of our brothers and sisters. We become ashamed that we have not evolved beyond ourselves. A black woman had a baby and abandoned it in an alley. She could have been anyone. But she was one of our own. Brothers and sisters, as we seek to progress, perhaps you would agree that we must do better, at least for our own. Pass it on!

Consequently, no one can speak for everyone. Nevertheless, when we see our own wallowing in the filth and confusion that so many lives have been sacrificed to overcome, it pains us.

I'm Thankful

I'm thankful for a lot of things, especially life itself
 I'm thankful for friends and family and even good health
 I'm thankful to have wisdom and faith throughout my life
 I'm also thankful to be blessed with strength through stress and strife

Some things that I'm thankful for
 Can be taken away, even things I adore
 But what I have shall never depart
 I'm thankful to have God and Glenda in my heart

The next writer is writing to us from Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Fl. Shawn is no stranger to The Beat Within as he always writes us mindful and thoughtful pieces. His writing topics vary from issue to issue but always stick with the basic writing about life in general. In the next few pieces you'll find an array of great detailed writing from Shawn. He talks about Love, life, and his dreams. So listen up and enjoy the next few pieces

I Had A Dream

This dream was so peaceful and serene
 We were living though the visions
 Of Dr. Martin Luther King
 I had a dream

I visualize that every boy and girl
 Was taught to be friends
 And race is what they run for fun
 Not the color of skin
 I had a dream

That man had never created deadly diseases

There was no crying or dying
 From cancer, AIDS or Hepatitis C
 There was no hunger and starvation
 From the USA to Africa
 And Africa wasn't stripped
 Of gold diamonds and oil
 By no good scavengers
 I dreamed....

That there were no wars
 Love and peace was the plan
 We destroyed nuclear plants
 And purified our lands
 I dreamed....

Osama Bin Laden came out
 Of hiding like a real man
 He knew Allah would justify
 His evil commands
 I had a dream....

We didn't have currency
 Taxes or inflation
 No armies only schools
 And colleges for higher education
 We didn't lie or cheat
 We made our own clothes
 Grew our own food
 You had to work to eat
 I had a dream....

We were all rich but
 In our hearts not our pockets
 There were no such things
 As computers lasers or rockets

I had a dream...
 That this world had
 Forgotten about color
 We all loved one another
 As sisters and brothers
 I had a dream....

We came together as one
 From the USA, Iraq, Cuba
 And Afghanistan
 And George Bush
 Saddam Hussein and
 Fidel Castro
 Hugged and shook hands.
 I had a dream.

A Love Manifesto

It is the music that gets you the most. It doesn't matter if you're in prison or on the streets. Songs have a way of triggering memories like nothing else. All it takes is that certain love ballad to send you tumbling back through time, while experiencing the most blissful feeling of nostalgia. Before you know it, you're reminiscing about that one mind blowing sexual liaison. The one you can never forget regardless of how many years have passed or how many lovers you've shared intimacy with.

Personally, I can't listen to a single slow jam from Keith Sweat first LP without reflecting on the precious time I shared with my sweetheart. Until this day, songs like Make It Last Forever, How Deep Is Your Love, In The Rain, and Young And Ready, conjure up feelings of euphoria I haven't experienced in years.

And to be honest, even though the marathon of copulation I enjoyed while listening to those musical selections was unforgettable, I believe that the real pleasure of that memory stems from the person I was with.

What I've learned over time is that the physical sensations felt through intercourse are only climatic extensions of a connection that was previously made mentally and spiritually. It is rare occasion when the three come together perfectly. But when they do, the end result is almost magical and explosive.

As a young man, I was influenced by my peers to never show outward displays of affection toward females lest I'd be ridiculed for being "whipped." As a consequence, the young lady who blessed me with the such a soul stirring encounter, never truly knew how caught up I was in her rapture.

Ultimately this quest machismo, along with my insistence on achieving "playa" status, cost me what I would later discover was my first real brush with true love. And while the elders around me insisted that the emotion I felt would soon manifest itself in another, a decade would pass before I discovered anything similar.

For this reason I tell you young brothers who may be on the same path toward making the same mistakes I committed, to never allow their pride to stand in the way of achieving true happiness. There is nothing wrong with being in love with a woman and expressing to her how she makes you feel.

The greatest joy a man can achieve on Earth is in the love he finds for a woman he loves him back in return. If you're currently involved with in a relationship but not quite sure if what you're feeling is real, perform this experiment. Take her on an unannounced trip to a remote location at least a four-hour drive from where you live. Find a bland hotel and rent a room for two nights. Make sure there is absolutely nothing else to do, so that the two of you are forced to entertain each other. Converse and make love for the entire time you're in the room. If it feels as good at the end of the day number two as it did at the beginning of day number one, that's a good sign. It doesn't answer your question but it does confirm that you're where you're supposed to be physically.

The real test though comes on the way home. If after spending all of that time and receiving all of the sex you can stand, you can't think of anything else but how much you enjoy her presence in your life, consider yourself sprung. And when you finally arrive at her place, if she is reluctant to get out of the car for fear of entering a home that doesn't include you, you're a lucky man because she probably feels the same way.

At that moment while your heart is racing and your palms are sweating, don't hesitate. This is not the time to worry about being smooth, cool, or hip. Declare your love and secure her a place in your life forever.

Do not dare let her get away, or you'll spend the next twenty years thinking about who she's with, where she is and what could have been. The regret that comes with that, I wouldn't wish on any man. Embrace love and show her how much she means to you. It could make all the difference in your future.



Is The World Better Because Of Me?

Ask yourself this question: Is the world better because of me? No! Ask yourself, is the world better off because I lived? Ask that question and give it some thought. Do some serious soul searching before coming up with an answer. Whatever you do, don't lie to yourself.

No one can dispute the fact that we live in a world that is fraught with problems. Every living soul should be aware of many of the problems that exist. A female friend has advised me for years that either I am a part of the problem or I am part of the solution.

No, many of us did not create the existing problems. Many of them existed before we were born. We cannot take the attitude that we did not create the problems; they do not affect us, so therefore we should make no effort to solve them.

We have a duty to make something good happen in this world or to solve some problems during our lifetime. No one has to solve all of the problems and no one has to solve problems all by themselves. It is perfectly all right to work with others to solve one or more community problems.

I have talked to a number of people who are dedicated to solving problems and making their community and their

world a better place to live. All of those people tell me that it is a soul tingling good feeling.

If you are a person and have made no contributions or have not attempted to make a contribution, then you should immediately get to work on becoming involved. If you are an older person and find yourself in a situation, then you should be concerned.

It would be a shame to have lived on this earth and have not made one single contribution to making this a better world. There is no excuse for not being a warrior in the cause if making your community and your nation better. There is plenty of room and need for those who are willing to work to make life better.

What these causes need are people who are willing to do more than just talk. What the world needs now is fewer takers and more doers. Ask yourself: Am I just a talker, or am I an agent of change? I can imagine it is a wonderful thinks to pass on to the great beyond and have people say the world is better because you lived.

I know the feeling is greater to have the people say the world is better because you lived and still live. What do you want the world to say about you? Your deeds will determine that.

The Journey

The journey begins the day you're born. Before you can comprehend anything going on around you, you're amazed at sounds and colors. You can't speak yet, but you already know how to appreciate being here.

As you enter grade school, the experience becomes one you'll never forget. You'll discover falling in love, being jealous, and getting angry because someone either stole your girlfriend or she's shown attention to someone else.

Now the teenage years begin, and this is the sweetest part of the journey. This is your growing period where you mature and decide what you're going to do with the rest of your life. That's when you decide how you're going to take care of yourself so your family will not longer have to take care of you.

The journey continues into your 20's and if the Lord willing, far beyond. In today's society, young adults try very hard not to enjoy that journey. As a matter of fact, most of them don't expect to enjoy it or don't know how. They're too busy trying to survive the dungeon they've cast themselves into.

It's a shame that many of them will miss the journey. They will miss the many people you meet along the way, the beautiful music you hear, the amazing accomplishments man will make, and just watching your children and grandchildren grow up.

The journey is full of fun and sadness. You will probably lose some loved ones along the way, both family and friends. Even when they leave, you'll still enjoy they journey, because new doors will open for you, and there are so many amazing things that are ahead just waiting for us to discover.

Please don't cut your journey short. If you do, you're cheating yourself. Even more important, don't cut someone else's journey short. You don't have the right to make that decision, and no one deserves to miss the splendor and glory of God's creation.

A Universal Secret Of Human Nature!

"Nobody wants to be wrong!"

There. I've said it. It looms in our minds and in our lives like a mountain higher than Mt. Everest! It is a truth in every facet of our existence. And it has become even more so now, than it has been in the past two hundred years.

Think about it. America has forgotten to say, "I'm sorry" and mean it. Instead what most of us say is, "if I have done anything to make you angry (which I know I have) then I apologize." Either that or, "Mistakes were made, but not by me!" but I cant claim credit. Instead, credit goes to authors Carol Tavis and Elliot Aronson, who co-wrote the book Mistakes Were Made (but not by me) : Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions and Hurtful Acts!

According to Tavis and Aronson, "As fallible human beings, all of us share the impulse to justify ourselves and to avoid taking responsibility for any actions that turn out to be harmful, immoral, or stupid." I wonder. Would that justify the actions of an Adolf Hitler, Sadaam Hussein or a George W. Bush? Would such a statement on the universality of self-justification successfully explain the actions of millions of US who've ended up in jails and prisons because we had refused to take responsibility for our villainous actions or inactions? Indeed, shall the human race become extinct because it will have doggedly refused to accept its own wretched responsibility?

And what about us black folks? What's to be said about our collective unwillingness to let slavery go... to forgive and forget, yet retain the fact that the destiny of our of our people is written in the destiny of our nation? For we too need to say, "I'm sorry" if to no one else but ourselves!

As I said at the beginning of our conversations, I have discovered one of the greatest secrets of human nature! It is called "The ability to take responsibility" and unless I miss my guess, it contains enough truth and power to set us all free!

A Love Story

Once upon a time, stranded upon an island in the middle of nowhere, lived all the characteristics of mankind, Greed, Misery, Hope, Knowledge, Faith, and Love, to name a few. After years of despair, Hope decided to approach Knowledge with an idea.

"Mr. Knowledge, you are so clever and smart. You have knowledge of all things. Why don't you build us a boat so that we can save ourselves?"

"I suppose I could; I don't know why I didn't think of that; I guess I had already given up."

So in the weeks and months to follow, Knowledge did in fact construct several rafts. Everyone was jumping for joy at the possibility of finally being rescued!

One by one the rafts set sail as everyone waved goodbye. But then, suddenly, a thought occurred to Knowledge... there were not enough rafts for everyone.

"One of us will have to remain."

With nervous, frightened glares at one another, Greed immediately took action. He started to load up all his worldly possessions upon one of the remaining rafts.

"Mr. Greed, you have so many possessions. Couldn't you leave a few things behind to make room for me?"

"I'm sorry, Love, but I couldn't dream of leaving anything behind. I only wish I could take even more! Besides, you of all people should know...where there is Greed, there can certainly be no Love. You'll have to ask one of the others."

With her head hung low, Love approached Misery.

"Pardon me, Misery, but have you room for one more?"

"One more? Is it not plain to see that I am already burdened with Pain and Sorrow? You have no place here, Love. Please leave us be."

Feeling dejected and heartbroken, Love started to come to the realization that she would be the one left behind. In a last ditch effort, she pleaded with Knowledge.

"Mr. Knowledge, you are the last one, my last chance,

Our next writer is writing to us from a Correctional Facility in Tracy, Ca. Darron has become somewhat of a weekly contributor, much to our pleasure. His writing is creative, clever, and powerful, so it would do you good to become familiar with him! Thanks again, Darron!

for all others have forsaken me. Surely you have room for me?"

"Had I not run out of materials, I would have built a raft for you, Love, but as it stands now, I have far too many charts and maps that I must use to navigate my way home. I simply have no room."

Saddened and left completely alone, Love knew her outlook was not good at all. For what seemed like an eternity, she waited patiently for her would-be rescuers. Then one day, out on the horizon, Love spotted a ship heading in her direction.

"I'm saved! I'm saved! Somebody came back for me. But who? All had forsaken me."

As the ship pulled up off the shore tears of joy streamed down her face as she realized who it was; it was Hope and Faith, her two closest friends.

"I thought you had abandoned me. Left me to..."

With an apologetic smile, Hope replied, "1st Corinthians 13 tells us that the three of us are very special in God's eyes. But of us three, you, Love, are the most special. We could not have possibly survived as you did, for it is written that you, Love, are patient and kind, never envious or boastful. You have the unlimited capacity to bear all things., believe all things, hope all things, endure all things. Love never fails! We didn't leave you behind, Love. We, Hope and Faith, were with you all the time."

With that said, the three of them embraced one another in tears of happiness the way sisters would. While holding hands with one another, they all looked up into the beautiful blue sky and thanked God, knowing that He, too, was smiling down upon them.

As the ship pulled up off the shore tears of joy streamed down her face as she realized who it was; it was Hope and Faith, her two closest friends.

BRANDON BURNETT

It's My Life at Stake!

I'm going insane
 With my mind frame
 Absorbing this pain
 That never remains the same
 Preventing immunity from being gained
 This tension is great
 I leave nothing but destruction in my wake
 Dragging these chains
 That once held me to my fate
 Searching for my only escape
 Because I know it's far too late
 To sit around and wait
 So I must clean my slate
 By doing whatever it takes
 Though every move I make
 Is based on the morals I create;
 Now as I shed this weight
 I can be on my way
 After all, it's my life at stake!

Our next writer is writing to us from Washington State Penitentiary in Walla Walla, Wa. His writing expresses his sentiments very clearly. So kick back, and flip through, and put some thought to these next couple of poems.

Look at the Time and Life You Live

Look at the time and life you live and what you plan to do next
 Look at what you didn't do but you could've done that you now regret
 Nothing to lose but all to gain, still stuck in the same
 Mind frame of what everybody thinks
 Overwhelming sympathy that nobody seems to Understand
 Dwelling on what you did that's done bringing unnecessary
 Stress
 Trapped in emotions you're never going to reveal, and
 Experiencing the things you thought you could never feel...

A Chance

He came to this earth
To give He died on the
cross
He gave you a gift

He suffered when He died
You could see it in His
face
By giving up His life
He's giving you a place

He's with you in the
day
He's with you in the night
He wants you in His
kingdom
So He can hold you tight

So no matter what you've
done
Things might look dim
But He's giving you a
chance
A chance to be with Him

Our next writer is writing to us from Cameron, MO. Herbert is a very eloquent and prolific writer from Crossroads Correction Center in Cameron, MO, has much to say to us. Give him a read!

Light the Way

Let my good works shine before me
For everyone to see
Glorifying God in Heaven
As the one who set us free

Lord, let me be a shining light
In all I say and do
That Your great love displayed in me
May lead someone to You.

God's Own Way

When the sun is rising
At the beginning of each day
That's God greeting us
In his own special way
And when the sun is setting
That's His work of art
Writing the day off
Saying good night from His heart

Stopped

Sometimes I think the world has stopped
But I open my eyes and God picks me up

When I look to the stars and the sky above
I then feel the power of God's love

No one else can make me feel this way
So I give my thanks to God every day

Jesus

Jesus always holds His children
He makes sure that we're safe
No matter where we are
No matter what we face

His hand will surely lead us
His strength will guide us through
You can rest with His assurance
Of His love for me and you
In times of tribulations
In heartache and in fears
His wings will overtake us
And He'll wipe away our tears

His mercy we do lean to
Enduring in His grace
Till one day we stand before Him
And look upon His face.

I Am a Prison

I am a prison; I'm damp and I'm cold
I hold men and women who are young and ones who are old
I'm surrounded by fence, cell doors, and gates that have locks
My walls are all made of steel, iron, and concrete blocks

I am a prison and I'm feared by all
I'll give you a chill when you hear me call
Your name becomes a number, your face just another
I'll show you no pity, I am not your mother

I am a prison, designed to be rough
I am where society houses its tough
Nobody has beat me, though they may have tried
But mostly they all still remain inside
I have no answers, so don't ask me why
I put those tears in your loved ones' eyes

I am a prison where nobody wants to be
I confine men and women who once were free
I control their pace, I slow down their stride
I strip them of dignity, I take their pride
Like animals that you might put in a cage
I contain these men and women and watch them age

I am a prison, I am full of despair
I can be a person's worst nightmare
I've been here many years and will be many more
You'll recognize me by my loud slamming door

I am a prison, a place you don't really want to live
I've so much to take but nothing to give
But there is one who does and He hears all your pleas
So pray to the Lord Jesus, for He has the Keys

At Close of Day

Oh, what joy to see the
Savior
At the close of life's long
day
After all the toilsome
journey
With its suffering by the
way!
What delight to hear Him
saying
In His loving, gentle tone,
"Well done, good and
faithful servant.
Enter thou thy heavenly
home!"

Oh, what joy to see our
loved ones
Who long since have
entered there!
God forbid that one be
missing
Through neglect or want of
prayer
May our love for one
another
As we tarry here below
Yield a rich, abundant
harvest

In that home to which
we go

We shall find the lost and
straying
Whom we brought to Him
ere now
In a crown of great rejoicing
That He places on our brow
While "the suffering's of the
present"
Often seem too hard to bear
They were meant for our
perfection
That His glory we might
share

Child of God, be ever
faithful!
Seek to know the Father's
will
Heed His voice and do His
bidding
Trust Him fully and "be
still."
Strength sufficient He will
give thee
Go, rejoicing on thy way,
And the joy of seeing Jesus
Will be thine at close of day

The Set of the Sail

I stood on the shore beside the sea
The wind from the west blew fresh and free
While past the rocks at the harbor's mouth
The ships went north and the ships went south
And some sailed out on an unknown quest
And some sailed into the harbor's rest
Yet ever the wind blew out of the west

I said to one who sailed the sea
That this was a marvel unto me
For how can the ships go safely forth
Some to the south and some to the north
Far out to sea on their golden quest
Or in the harbor's calm and rest
And ever the wind blew out of the west?

The sailor smiled as he answered me
"Go where you will when you're on the sea
Though head winds baffle and squalls delay

You can keep the course from day to day
Drive with the breeze or against the gale
It will not matter what winds prevail
For all depends on the set of the sail."

Voyager soul on the sea of life
Over waves of sorrow and sin and strife
When fogs bewilder and foes betray
Steer straight on your course from day to day
Though unseen currents run deep and swift
Where rocks are hidden and sandbars shift
All helpless and aimless, you need not drift

Oh, set your sail to the heavenly gale
And then, no matter what winds prevail
No reef shall wreck you, no calm delay
No mist shall hinder, no storm shall stay
Though far you wander and long you roam
Through salt sea-spray and over white sea-foam
No wind that can blow but shall speed you home.

Unless We Go

Unless we go to all mankind
According to the plan
That God conceived in His own mind
Before the world began;
Unless the finished work of Christ
Is told to every man,
Salvation's plan for sinful man
Will still unfinished be.

Unless the ears of every man
Has heard the joyful sound,
That true forgiveness for their sins
Within God's Word is found;
And that the prayer of faith in Christ
Will start them heaven bound,
Salvation's plan for every man
Will still unfinished be.

Unless each tribe and ev'ry tongue
Can read God's written Word
Unless the story of God's grace
By ev'ryone is heard
Unless God's Spirit through His Word
In ev'ry heart has stirred,
Salvation's plan for sinful man
Will still unfinished be.

Prisoner's Prayer

Though it is hard day in and day out
Sometimes we read, pray and workout
Like anxious dogs we wait for our food
Pray to God to be in a good mood
I don't blame anyone for where now I call home
It was part of God's plan and mistakes of my own
With faith I sit in my prison cell twenty-three hours a day
But with the help of the Lord, I'll be molded like clay
Into what God has planned--a soldier of the Lord
But when I get out will I have the strength of a sword
To never bend and to stand firm in my beliefs
I know the answer is always, as the Lord protects me
This walk with God has been hard, but yet I know
There are two sets of footprints and only one was my own.

Guard Your Mind

Be careful what you think
Shun every evil strife
Because one thing is certain
Your thoughts can run your life

Wherever dwells the mind
The eyes and ears go, too
What you see and hear
Affects the work you do

Keep your thought life pure
Take captive each wrong done
In the name of Jesus
The victory is won!

He Was Me

He mocked Him with the others
Cutting jokes at every chance
The man was just too busy
To see His forgiving glance

He joked, spat, and insulted
As the beaten Man trods
He tried to make Him stumble
Throwing rocks of hardened sod

As blood trickled from the brow
Where the thorn crown sat upon His head
"Hail the King of Jews!"
The man so boldly said

He held the hammer high
And drove in the sharpened nails
He did not even shudder
As this Man called Jesus

He pulled the ropes with the others
Proudly raising up the cross
The man was never thinking
About what he had really lost
He had the spear in hand
And stabbed the bloody Man's side
He stood and held it there
As the Man called Jesus cried

The bloody Man asked for something
To quench His awful thirst
In the line for the vinegar sponge
He battled to be first

Jesus died an ugly death
Upon Calvary's cruel tree
And I will not forget the man who put Him there
For you see, he was me!!

A Letter

Myself a letter I have sent
 Before my thoughts grow cold
 Ask for the grace to be content
 And if you fall into a ditch
 Don't dig for gold
 But just climb out and repent.

"Stupid is as stupid does", said one of my favorite philosophers, Forrest Gump. I've had plenty of chances to test that the theory to validate it as fact. Unlike many people in prison, I wasn't socially predisposed to a life of crime, and prior coming to America no one in my immediate family had any experience with crime, drugs or gangs. Sadly, I was a 'pioneer' in all three, and was fortunate enough to end up in the joint, and not the graveyard. Life in prison isn't the end of the world (in fact, for me it was a new beginning), while death is our personal apocalypse, catapulting us into judgment before the only True and Righteous Judge Who takes into account everything except for our lame excuses and justifications.

There is an ancient account of a slave ship docking somewhere in the old Roman Empire. In that city lived a virgin nun, who upon hearing of the ship hurried to find the owner, in order to buy herself a little girl, thinking, "I will take this child, and deliver her from the evils of this world. I will raise her as my daughter, teaching her about God's love and virtuous life." The owner of the ship brought two little girls to the nun, who ended up taking one of them. On his way back to the ship, the captain ran into a 'madam' of the local whorehouse. Who when seeing the little munchkin desired to have her, to raise her in the tricks of the trade. She bought the child, and took her to the brothel.

Now the man who was relating this story says, "Do you see the unsearchable mystery of God's wisdom? The holy woman took the child and taught her everything good, teaching her the fear of God and the monastic life. The madam, on the other hand, having taking that poor little girl made her into a vessel and instrument of Satan. And what other trade could she have taught her, other than how to damn her soul and all sort of evil?"

And what can we say of such a dreadful situation? Both of the girls were tiny, both were sold, not knowing where they went. One ended up in God's hands, the other in the Devil's. Can we say that God will equally judge them, the one just as the other? How is this possible! If both will fall into the same sin, is it fair to say that they'll be judged with the same judgment? Is this possible? One girl knew of God, of judgment, day and night being taught God's word and of His kingdom; the other poor soul, meanwhile, did not see or hear anything good, but on the contrary, was only abused diabolically & taught evil. How is it possible that they should be judged with the same judgment?"

If I apply this simple story to my life, I know that the remainder of my life is given me to "make straight what is crooked" in my own soul, in my own life, and try to be a positive influence in my community - even in prison. My family brought

The next writer is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Mikhail doesn't need an intro as he's been submitting incredible writing for us for the past countless issues. Mikhail is a talented writer that's been through his own fair of trials and tribulations that he would like to share with you readers, with hopes that y'all can learn something. Learn from his mistakes, listen to his story, and embrace these pieces.

me to America to try to give me a better life, a better future than what was possible in the USSR. I've abused my freedom by taking the life of another, and by destroying another family's future, as well as my own.

Can I complain against America? Will I answer for America before God? No, I'll answer only for myself, and - in His grace - God has given me the rest of my life to know Him, to prepare for death and eternity, to be faithful in the little that I have, on this side of the fence.

A recent workshop topic was "achievements" (see 13/09). It's so easy to fool ourselves into believing that to achieve means to gain, to acquire, to heap up, to be popular, accepted, and all that other nonsense. If that's the case, then Hitler and Stalin were two "overachievers", whom we should emulate. But that's nonsense. The greatest achievement in life is to KNOW THE TRUTH of what we are doing in this world, and to humbly accept its' consequences. It is to know God, to know yourself, and to love those around us who are made in his image.

I often fail living the TRUTH, though, I know it, but I try daily to unite my knowledge and practice. This achievement, for me, means "losing" and shedding all the b. s. that I picked up in my youth, that's still attached to my soul. It means being a servant, and not worrying so much about what others think, as much as what god thinks. At the end, He is the One I will face, His love is what drives me today, and the desire to be with Him is what pales everything else in comparison.

In our Soviet schools, we were taught that there is no God - that He was an invention of the rich. At least that's what my teacher told me. But now, having found out for myself that HE IS, and more so, that HE IS LOVE (not out of a book, but personally), all of my past failures and mistakes are forgiven - though not forgotten. They are a reminder of what I used to be - the fool I was - and what I hope to avoid from becoming again. In my teens, I did much taking: from God, from my family, from the country that adopted me. Now, as a Christian, I'm able to give - first myself to the Lord Who has given Himself to me, and to others in my prison community.

For me, my repentance is my achievement - not because it's easy or pleasant, but because it extends beyond the tangible & temporary things of this life. Fact is if this brief existence is "all there is to it", then who cares about "achievements" and all that other rhetoric about "doing right" - it's all about "getting mine", right? But, because this life is a brief journey with the eternal consequences, I'm able to use even my so-called "lost years" as a platform to turn away from myself in turning to God, to lose a little, in order to gain much.

May the Lord be with everyone on their own particular journey, and in their own trials, many of which by far outweigh anything that I've experienced.

Redemption

Without redemption on Calvary's Hill
 Life's a fleeting mirage always ending in loss
 It's a valley no shovel or effort can fill
 Where death is a desert that no one can cross

We don't preach propaganda from somewhere above
 Where Paradise reigns, but on earth it's concealed
 Jesus Christ is the Image of our Father's love
 With our death He died, with His life we are healed.

Real evil He faced & bearing our strife
 World's agony defeating in his final breath
 By death He trampled upon sin & death
 He rose, while to the dead bestowing life

The Truth itself was crucified & killed
 And still today it's often buried in the grave
 But even in the tomb His love revealed
 And hardened hearts like mine He came to save.

In Just A Dream

I had another dream about her again last night. I don't most nights anymore, It's like a dream that just will not go away. Her standing a top of the hill in the moonlight and all you can see is the dark outline of her beautiful body. I always dream about one day getting back with her, to show her a fantasy filled love life.

I loved her and she just didn't know how much, but I couldn't for some reason stop thinking about her. It's becoming an every night occurrence, but when I awake from my sleep I start to cry. I miss her and wish I could hold her tight and tell her how much I'm sorry and that things are different now. Though words could never express that emotion or could never amount to how sorry I really feel.

It's hard to describe, to put into words and hard to swallow a lot of the time. It's hard to not have the love in your, well, loved one's life. What use to be comfort is now discomfort. I always dream of one day, her forgiving me and seeing how much I've changed my life and how much I've let God instead of my self, and that he's made me a better person in the making.

I long to show her a change in me and to prove my love for her steadfast. Though the way I treated her wasn't right and though I had some questing about the things she did, that I believe she wasn't truthful with me and I don't believe she would ever tell me, but she would have to know that what ever happened. I'd forgive her because it just doesn't matter any longer.

There's a part of me that says no, no for the simple fact of not ever really getting back with her, because so much pain and heartache between the two of us. In a way there were so much differences and it was unbearable to realize that. But it will only be that dream until the day I go.

I had always truly believed that she was the only true love I've ever known in my life. She filled an empty spot

Our next writer is writing to us from a correctional facility in Snyder, Texas. Jerry is a great writer with no fear on expressing his feelings. Listen to his next couple pieces and hear Jerry pour his heart out.

that no one at the time could ever fill. She has take ninety-nine percent of my heart and no one could ever fill the one percent that's left behind.

So, I leave it, hoping one day she could complete what she started. Then and only then when it's complete it will be a life that is unexplainable and out of this world.

When we were together it always seemed that something was missing or wrong, but now to come to think of it when we were together, I always wanted to tell her about the feeling she gave me when we were together and holding one another close. For some reason every time I went to open my mouth I couldn't find the right words to describe the uncontainable feelings I was so longing, and wanting to get out. It's like something trapped in a room without no windows or a door, and trying rapidly to find a way out, but instead to find no way out at all.

To capture her smile on her face," Oh how it lit up the darkest spots in my life and brought out the hardcore to soft and tenderness". The beauty that another holds will never amount to the beauty in her. The love one can give is like a romance novel that you couldn't put down, more and more as you search to see what's going to take place next. Though that dream still lies ahead and yet she's far away, but every time I dream it's as close as I'll probably ever get.

So, as I dream just a dream, I long to see her in every moment, every silhouette, every dream come true in every step she makes, to have that chance to hold her as I sleep, just one more time, so it be. I see two in a life that was meant to be, but as I fade away in this dream and come to the reality of me, then once again you fade from my reach and I'm lying where I started...

Walking Alone

When you've walked a lonely road
 For so long you've walked alone
 Where your going, I don't know
 Where you've been, it only shows
 Only when you get there will you go
 Then can you only know
 While you there you may not know
 But when you're leaving then
 You'll know
 So while your walking all alone
 Only then you should think about
 Where you go
 While your thinking about where to go...
 Find out why you started all alone
 So that way when you walk again
 Maybe you won't go through
 The things that you went through to
 Walk where you've walked and
 When you walked alone
 So while you've walked a lonely road
 Only then have you walked down
 My lonely road on the walk
 When you've
 Walked alone.

**THE BEAT
 WITHIN**

Life

Walking in a pile of glass
 My heart broken
 Love never last
 So much tears and pain
 I'm sadder
 I feel like I'm going insane
 This strong hand holding me
 Can't get out of the grip
 Man, would I ever slip
 I'm like a puppet
 Being controlled
 Tired of being locked up
 And being in the 'hood
 Tired of this orange
 Feel other people's pain
 I feel strange
 Life is a mirror
 You could relate
 But I need help
 And regulate my evil addiction
 It's like a story I'm in
 A movie
 An actor
 I'm playin' in.

We first met Lucero Herrera in the girls' unit in San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center, where she wrote her heart out into her poems for The Beat. Now she is in 850 (Bryant, the San Francisco County Jail) awaiting trial. Here are some of her newest poems, expressing the loneliness and sorrow of hanging in 850 for months.

World

Tired of being here
 Silent, confused
 I'm alone
 I have fear
 Feeling cold
 My heart's frozen
 Can I take this role?
 When am I going to
 bounce out of this earth?
 Accomplish a lot, but still
 feel pain
 That's all I gain
 Scared to change
 Don't know my outcome
 So what do I face?
 Would it last long?
 Enemies, a color, a block I
 don't own
 Why? Why ain't I fighting
 for my own?
 Got respect, love, and
 pride from the 'hood

But they never
 understood
 A young girl full of things
 Can't speak or change
 Confused of what
 She going to fear
 And don't know love and
 what it means
 Spray paint, graffiti
 That's the way
 She express her heart
 Can't shed a tear
 She built a brick wall
 Pride and anger
 Scared to tell the world
 How she feel
 Rage, and ready to take
 this role
 Stuck in a cage with
 chains
 Abusive past relationship
 and family
 No love, so that's why I
 bang

Grandma

Only if I could hold you
 Tell you my problems
 Wish you was here
 To take the role as a mother
 Miss you so much
 I wish I could be with you in heaven

I miss walking to school with you
 And the love you gave me
 But you my angel from God
 I miss your hugs
 And the toys you bought me
 Grandma, I love you so much
 I have to fight me

I'm stuck in a shhh hole
 Can you save me?
 Please take the frozen heart that I own
 And the devil gave me
 Cutie, come back, 'cause I'm alone
 Wish I could change and be somebody
 Have things I own
 RIP, Grandma

December 10, 2007

Today I woke up tired but happy—a blessing for another day...to see breath, hear everything, but today so far is okay. It's morning. I'm in school. It's loud, but I ain't gonna to let it get to me. The drama, the noise and family issues I ain't going to let it affect me. I'm in situations right now with my family ... and with myself, trying to reflect, build my goals, extend my mind...

My Mama Prays

My mama prays that I quit the life I'm in
 That I gotta change my ways
 But the streets is calling me
 I can't stop this game
 I was raised a soldier
 So it's hard to get it over

You

I sit here, think of you
 I dream of you and all the things we do
 You been there through thick and
 thin

I wonder every day
 If you meant to be
 You love me
 And was there for me
 Do you mean the words
 Or you just playin' with me?
 Ride with and been through a lot
 You just don't understand
 My heart is unlocked

You my first love and I just experience
 Did things that somebody else
 Wouldn't did it
 Do you understand what I feel?
 I love you so much

Step Dad
 You raised me since I was a baby
 I'm your princess
 Love, that's what you gave me

Why did you go
 I was only twelve years old
 I need you
 Look at me

I'm not a little girl

I needed you, a father
 Somebody would call "Dad"
 To come home and have a family
 I guess you are too far

You, my mom, and brother
 Left me stranded alone
 This anger I can't hold
 I miss you a lot 'til this day
 Don't know

I wish I could have you
 And say, "Dad, Come on"
 So why did you go?

Short Bio

Growing up in Brooklyn, New York. Life is wonderful. My parents taught me the value of life and giving. My poems and other writings reflected this life in the big city. It can even have its ups and downs.

The summer and going to the beaches in '02. Coney island brings back memories. The spring and fall sing like today past. As I get older I can reflect on this while in prison.

The Old Castle

The old castle seems distance, must be the strong feeling must be that old building on the mountain yellow as it look. The number don't look right. The book shows something else. Getting closer to the castle, I smile, I smell myself must be the fries I ate. The sky is yellow with a mist of blue.

A call came to me. Joe Henry blue, Joe Henry blue, must be mom's sweet voice, she bring my reflection to an attention. Good you made it today, gave her a kiss and a hug, thank for the invitation you sure a friend, tears come down memories lane.

Have you eaten lunch yet? You look hungry. Have you eaten lately? The old eyes sure look blue cover with snow. The winter winds light came on. The night of the castle bring black the old days. The old stuff came back.

You Protected Me

My love for you is like the trigger attraction to the bullet

I'm attracted to you, but I'm afraid to pull it

To pull the trigger would mean love but also pain

So give me my love, your love shall ease my pain

Your love would bring about change and strengthen me as a man

I'm available for your foresight, so lay out your intellectual plan

I await your plan and think volumes of what is yet to come

What will be your proposition, will it bring about change?

Or will it bring heartache, pain, and all sorts of malice

Will it be so tragic as the fall of an acrobat?

As I fall you spread your net to catch me

I found comfort in your arms, you protected me.

A Hope for Tomorrow

Power to those who seek knowledge

From the cradle to the grave

Power to those who stand up

For what is right

Power to those who are

Fearless in their very heart

Power to you for reading

These words of power

Power to you for being true

To yourself and others

There's power for everyone

A hope for tomorrow.

The next writer is coming from Arizona State Prison in Tuscan, Az. Josheph would like to share a couple pieces. One of them is dedicated to his Grandma.

Grandma Voice

I was awaking by a voice footsteps seem to be right there

The dream seems to be right there

Must be grandma coming to wake me up

Her dream came to me

I hear her voice before she came into the room

Her middle name (nickname) Sweet Susan

Us grandchildren call her this wonderful

Since we was little

"Wake up son you'll sure a nice boy this morning"

Sweet Susan sure a wonderful mother

Her smile keep waking me up

She always brighten the day my clothes stand at a attention

When she came in the air was press

I thought she was an iron but she didn't, it was her smile

Laughing was an all day job for us

She sure and ideal person when I was born, my

grandmother gave the home: Joe Henry Blue

She an ideal person

Ma come in with her sweet singing voice

"Midnight Train To Georgia." By G. Knight and The Pips

We start singing some old Jazz song

They was really in tune with me

We dance to the beat

Grandma sure sounds good

The night went on

I wonder where am I?

CURTIS COOK

Our next writer is coming from Selma, AL Curtis Cook, from Selma, AL, has not only been contributing lots of great writing, but he's also been introducing The Beat to lots of his friends. Thanks, Curtis!

I'm The Best

To and from the twilight hour

I shine

No

I don't have time for childish

Games

I'm on a mission

For fortune

And endless fame

I'm history in the making at its

Best

Your children, children will read

My poetry

They will know I'm the best!

The Tongue Twister

Silver snakes sliver sideways

As the hazy highway highlights Heaven

Tall timber takeover the terrain

Small sparrows swoop showing swagger

The music the muse makes merry

The love, the life, the lungs, the liver

Teach thou the way of the tongue twister.

"Slight Fill Of It"

Liquor stores on every corner advertising malt liquor and cancer in a pack, Section 8 apartments and homes... youngstas on bikes, hoodlums on corners, fiends crowed these streets, neighborhood bums looking for cans to get hit and a bit to eat, baby crying, daddy gone, momma leaving, there's always somebody on these streets grieving...

Kids playing without worry or care, out of five of those kids, four of them going to become a part of this cycle right here...

People got many names, the 'hood, the 'jets, the projects. Just to name a few...it's a community of poverty stricken people who are look down on ain't treated like equals...

To make it to 25 oh boy that's a blessing, 'cause the youth is ruthless while packing Smith and Wesson, while prison yards ain't teaching lessons...

It's a war in the Middle East, crap it's a war here but nobody donating money or shedding tears for the mothers who lost they child to this war here...

Good heaven's, good grief, lines around the block like a Hollywood Club, just to get a simple box of commodities, can beef, can chicken, powder milk, and Kix cereal...

It's a series of things that go on here every day...

Some try to find a way but most get stuck and stay, it made me who I am today, a part of the cycle, a statistic, a number, it made me strong and independent... you just took a walk with me and got a "slight fill of it".

"Can you Last One Day"

Make believe, a dream, fiction, I wish it was, its not, it's reality.... poverty living monthly off state help and community commodity, violent tragedies, bullets flying, innocent bystanders dying, teen pregnancy's, boy a lot of mommas is crying.

Every day somebody ship to a box either it's two cots and three cots, or wool, linen, or a cotton cot, and every day somebody turning over state evidence to the cops, and every day that single parents turns into a dope fiend some call 'em tips and some call 'em knocks.

While some hustle to get by, while some hustle to get high, while some hustle to secure them a new life of staying alive, a war zone... where it's better to be caught with it than without, without you might get white lined in chalk, and the newspapers headline "Another Hoodlum Shot" babies found in trash cans, mama cared more about dope than being the best mother she can, daddy ship to the pen, or it 98.91% chance the streets got him, another bastard child... it's got a lot of us knocking at hell's door, we at hell on earth, so pain, sorrow, and darkness we prepared for, what's behind the door...

While I smoke cannabis to the face and think, wow we live in a messed up place, I still wake up every day, with a smile on my face, 'cause I made it through another day, I got a question for you, "can you last one day"?

Sometimes you get stuck in something thicker than molasses wondering where you went wrong with your actions, then your up again free from the struggles...

Our next writer is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Maurie shares with us a few deep poems. First he speaks about soul searching and being strong no matter what. His writings paint a vivid picture of what goes on in the 'hood and in real life. Give him a moment of your time and let him paint you a picture of his thoughts.



"Soul Searching"

Try one thing you fall so you try another, wondering what's your forte, if you'll find your purpose day, one heartbreak, one let down or another, wishing you could go back to a child depending on your mother...

But you gotta be strong and independent, that's why you keep fighting to get to the finish, the finish is when you find yourself, grow to your full potential, knowing your wealth and knowing yourself...

Sometimes you get stuck in something thicker than molasses wondering where you went wrong with your actions, then your up again free from the struggles and distractions, it's a rollercoaster of feeling and thoughts, up again, down again, turns, and loops, tired of going through the hoops...

The emancipation of self wills soon come that's when you will become yourself and become one, spiritually, physically, and mentally, it'll be a great feeling like being relief of a heavy capacity, but just know your journey will soon end to your "soul searchin'."

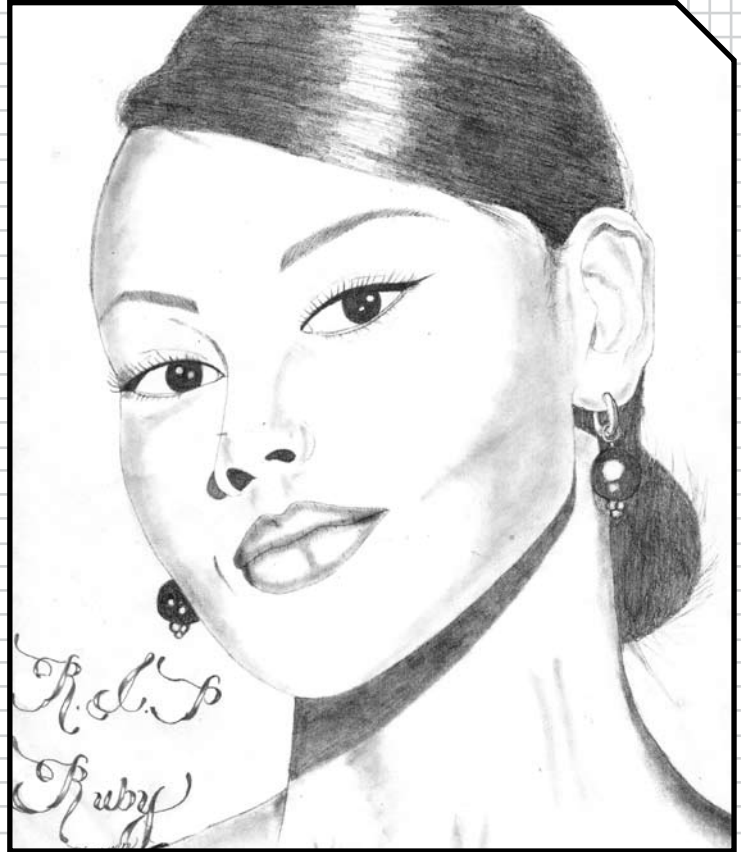
Friends

Friends are there
 When they need you
 But when you're lost
 No one care to gave directions
 I'm tired of going through the same shit
 When I'm locked up no one seems to be found!
 Nothing is needed because I'll make it through all on my own
 It isn't easy but it can be done
 Trust me life in jail is no fun
 Friends are there
 When they need you
 But when you're lost no one care to give directions
 Tired of going through
 The same shit over and over again
 But yet I do nothing about it
 When will I live to learn from my mistakes?
 It seems like never to me!

Xiomara aka Muñeca is writing from a correctional facility in Niantic, Ct. Muñeca is a veteran writer in The Beat Within. She shares with us a few deep poems that reflect her feelings and thoughts while being incarcerated, including the "relief" cutting on herself provides! Her writings reflect life's struggles, love, and learning. Please welcome Muñeca back, and give her a read!

Love

Love will sting
 But it shouldn't hurt
 If it does it will never work
 Love is blind
 But to an extent
 You don't head into something
 That you'll regret
 Love is protective
 But never obsessive
 Or even possessive
 If so that person is bound to be aggressive
 Love should be playful
 But not to the point of abuse
 If so honey please at that person loses
 Love is suppose to set you free
 But not sending your body six feet deep
 If so lil' mama love was never found



Hope's In His Laughter

How can I live the audacity to take it?
 How can I mend my heart?
 If people continue to break it
 I try to present myself as happy
 But most of the time I fake it
 It's hard when you have a child
 That you don't even know
 Feelings you have inside
 And are scared to show
 I want to climb on board
 And sail away
 Where there's peace in my mind
 And a sense of stillness in my soul
 I can hear laughter
 But can't really make out who it is
 I look at my son's picture
 Gosh he's getting so big
 An image of me
 It's almost shocking to see
 This was my life
 Before they took it from me.

Cutting

I'm dying inside
 As the razor cuts through my skin
 I feel a sense of relief in me
 As I begin to bleed
 My heart gives into the plead
 For someone to let me loose
 For a soul who can set me free
 I'm dying inside
 Yet no one knows a thing
 Suicide crosses my mind daily
 But like every other day
 I hide pain with a big fake smile
 And a convincing laugh
 Cutting is my way to vent
 A lot of people don't know what it does
 Or how powerful it can be
 Its like taking daily med's
 Only cutting is as needed
 I don't need it much
 But when I do I'm usually dying inside
 As the razor cut's through my skin
 I feel a relief within me
 As I watch my skin split open
 My thin blood, rushes out
 And then my heart gives in
 And I'm back to me.

*I am a prison where nobody wants to be
I confine men and women who once were free
I control their pace, I slow down their stride
I strip them of dignity, I take their pride
Like animals that you might put in a cage
I contain these men and women and watch them age*

read the rest of Herbert Schweigert's BWO piece on page 44

